

S E R M O N S
O N
S E V E R A L S U B J E C T S
A N D
O C C A S I O N S

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

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Published from the AUTHOR's Manuscripts for the
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V O L II.

WOLVERHAMPTON: Printed by G. SMART.

S E R M O N S

O N

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

A N D

O C C A S I O N S

IN TWO VOLUMES

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PAGE 20. l. 18, 19. for Existence read Existence. P. 42. l. 2. for discourse read discourse. P. 71. l. 3. for Institution read Institution. P. 90. l. 17. for fortified read fortified. P. 94. l. 9. for Acts (ii. 36.) read (Acts ii. 36.) P. 94. l. 22. for Gound read Ground. P. 102. l. 15. for Temptatation read Temptation. P. 254. l. 10. for see read find. P. 260. last l. for tv. read ty.

S E R M O N I.

I. THESS. V. 23.

*The very God of Peace sanctify you wholly :
And I pray God your whole Spirit and Soul
and Body be preserved blameless unto the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

SANCTIFICATION, or a State of Holiness, signifies in general a Pursuit of virtuous Principles, the renouncing and denying the corrupt Appetites of human Nature, and a Compliance with the Demands of Religion and Conscience. But the Prayer of the Apostle, in the Words which I have read to you, seems more particular in it's Wishes, and to design not only a State of Grace, but Growth and Improvement in it; imploring God's heavenly Influence upon the Minds of the Thessalonians, that as they knew how they ought to walk and to please God, so they

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might

might advance from *Strength to Strength*, and abound more and more in all Virtue and Godliness.

St. Paul requires,

1. That our *Spirit Soul and Body* be sanctified, and mentions

2. The *Duration and Continuance* of this Purification of our Nature, that we be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

The Apostle expresses himself, perhaps, after the Philosophy of those Times, which taught that Man consisted of three Parts, a pure Spirit, an ethereal Matter, which an illustrious † Ancient called the subtile Vehicle of the Soul, and a mortal or gross Body. Whether by the *Spirit* was meant that spiritual Principle of Intelligence that thinks within us, and distinguishes us from the Brute Creation; and by the *Soul*, that vital Part which we enjoy in common with

† Pythagoras

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the Beasts that perish, the Source of Sensation and Self-motion ; without however dwelling upon these Niceties of Distinction it is sufficient to observe, that the Apostle by these different Expressions intended to denote the whole System of human Nature with all it's Faculties, Powers, and Operations. Accordingly the *Spirit* is sanctified, when the Understanding is disengaged from Error and Prejudice, and knows how to distinguish between Truth and Falshood, between Good and Evil. The *Soul* also is in the same desirable State, when the Will rejects what is hurtful, and cleaves to what is serviceable to our true Interests ; when our Inclinations are duly governed, when our Passions are obedient to Reason and Faith, when we are habitually practised to repress and restrain them within the Bounds of Duty. The Body likewise is in the same holy Disposition, when there is Nothing in our Actions, in our Conversation, or in our Conduct, but what is answerable to the Will of God, and to the Rules of Purity and Temperance.

Religion is not satisfied by a *partial* Compliance. It is not sufficient, that the Mind be stored and possessed with some good Notions and Principles, or the Will directed aright in some Instances of Duty, to refuse certain Appetites, and abstain from certain Sins, or to live in the Performance of any one particular Species of good Actions. But the *whole Man* in all the Parts and Abilities of his Nature, in his Thoughts and Intentions, in his Inclinations, Actions, and Conversation, his *whole Spirit Soul and Body*, must be conformable to the Rules, and Lessons of Religion. To amend a little the Outside, to abstain from some Things manifestly wicked, to practise some outward Duties, some Actions that have but the Semblance of Piety ;---all this is no more than the Holiness of the Pharisees, who made *clean the Outside*, but *within were full of Extortion and Excess*. (Matth. 23, 25.) Such is the Religion of too many that call themselves good Christians, who have
all

all the *Form of Godliness* without any of the inward Spirit and Life. But *thou blind Follower* of the purest Religion in the World, *cleanse first that which is within*, and purify thy Heart.---If the Fountain be clear, the Streams that issue from it will partake of it's Purity.

But, on the other hand, let us not think with some modern Enthusiasts, that the Rectitude of our Minds, and the Strength of our Faith is alone sufficient to save us, sufficient even to make Vice Virtue, and change Evil into Good. They profess to believe that all depends on the Disposition of the Mind. Have but Faith, or rather a blasphemous Presumption, and thou canst not sin. Guilty thou mayest be indeed of the material Actions of Dishonesty, Intemperance, and filthy Lusts : But Faith will sanctify all this, nor shall any Wickedness be imputed. Such are the sacrilegious Doctrines of mad or knavish Men, condemned very plainly by the Apostle, who requires a blameless

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blameless Body as well as a believing Mind, and commands us to *glorify God in our Body and in our Spirit, which are God's.* (1. Cor. vi. 20.)

A second Requisite in the Holiness of Christians relates to the *Duration* and *Continuance* of it,---that we be *preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The same Idea of Christian Duty the Apostle gives us, (Philip. ii. 15.) where he exhorts the Philippians to be *blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without Rebuke*; and in this Epistle to the Thessalonians he beseeches God to *stablish their Hearts unblameable in Holiness before God even the Father.* (Ch. iii. v. 13.)

But is not this an hard Saying, and an impracticable Demand? Can it be possible for Creatures so weak and imperfect as we are to live *blameless*, to preserve our Innocency from all Spot and Blemish, and to stand
without

S E R M O N I. 7

without Rebuke before the infinitely pure God? This is the common Pretence for rejecting every Exhortation to Perfection, and deserves therefore to be carefully examined.

The Apostle doubtless is sincere and in earnest, when he requires this Degree of Purity in those *that name the Name of Christ*. It is the subject of his Prayers to the infinite God; and therefore unquestionably a serious Duty; and not impossible likewise, since a wise and good Man, as St. Paul certainly was, would never pray for Impossibilities. And yet it is too true likewise on the other hand, that *there is not a just Man that dwelleth upon the Earth, and sinneth not*. Allowed Infirmities there are, from which human Integrity is never free. After our most diligent Endeavours in the Race of Virtue "there will be Lapses, there will be Inadvertencies, there will be Surprises." Let us therefore enquire what the Scripture means in those Passages, and they are not a few

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few, in which it commands us to be *blameless* before God.

In order to this, Sincerity, and Growth, and Perseverance in Piety are evidently necessary. We are then without Blame, when God, that *searches the Heart*, sees that we act sincerely; when the ruling Principle of our Minds is an unfeigned Desire and steady Resolution to do his Will, flowing from a sovereign Love of God, that gives him the Preference to every other Affection. The *blameless*, as a sensible † Writer describes the *righteous Man*, is one, who loves “his Duty above all Things, who *fears God*, and “*eschews Evil*, whom no Allurement of “worldly Pleasure, Profit, or Honour, no “Fear of worldly Loss, or Suffering, can persuade to *desert* his Duty, to act against his “Conscience, or wilfully and deliberately to “transgress any known Law of God; not “the Man who is entirely free from Failings, “which, strictly speaking, may be called sin-

† Abernethy's Sermons on various Subjects, Vol. I. P. 259.

ful,

“ful, and who never in the Course of his
 “Life has by Ignorance, or Surprise, been
 “drawn into those indeliberate Actions,
 “which upon a Review he cannot justify.”
 For if this indeed were the Sense of being
blameless before God, “who could pretend
 “to it? But it has pleased God graciously to
 “accept of Man upon lower” and easier
 “Terms, upon the Terms of” true “Sin-
 “cerity, upon a ruling Principle and Pur-
 “pose of Heart to do his Will” shewn “by
 “the Fruits of Piety, Temperance, and
 “Charity appearing habitually in our
 “Lives.”

But then Growth and Improvement in
 Religion are the natural Offspring of Since-
 rity. What issues from the Heart is alive
 and vigorous, and contented with nothing
 that is short of all possible Perfection. This
 engages the whole Man, and actuates all the
 Powers of *Body, Soul, and Spirit*. Observe
 in the Concerns and Ambitions of the pre-
 sent Life how the ruling Principle exerts
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itself. Opposed, as it may be now and then, in lesser Instances, and by under Passions, yet in general it prevails, directs and shapes the whole Conduct, and tends regularly to it's designed Issue. The Passions habitually submit to it's sway. *To one it says go, and it goeth; to another come, and it cometh.* Every Rivulet of Inclination mixes with the principal Stream, and strengthens the general Current. Such is the Case in Religion likewise, when a sincere Love of God and Goodness has the Ascendant in the Heart. And of this the great Apostle St. Paul was himself a very eminent Example. Good as he was already, his whole Study and Endeavour was to become better. Not contented with any determinate Measure and Degree of Virtue, and much less to have just past the Line that distinguishes between a good and a bad Character, he was still hastening forwards with eager and incessant Efforts, *forgetting those Things which are behind, as he describes the restless Ardor of his religious Sincerity, and reaching forward unto those Things*
which

which are before, I press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The sincere and blameless Christian not only grows in Virtue, but perseveres in it, lives now and always in the faithful Discharge of his Duty, and continues, as he vowed in his baptismal Dedication of himself, *Christ's faithful Soldier and Servant unto his Life's End.* By no means are we deserving of this glorious Title, unless we persist steadily and without interruption in a Course of good Works, uniformly governed by an honest Conscience, and a strict Adherence to virtuous and religious Principles. He that abandons his Warfare, and deserts the Banners of *the Captain of his Salvation*, far from being blameless, deserves the severest Censures of Infamy and Suffering. How can we be preserved pure, if we renounce our Purity, *if after we have escaped the Pollutions of the World, we are again entangled therein.* Piety is not only a consistent but an enduring Principle. For-

faken it may be indeed ; but the Obedience, which God will accept and reward, is that which perseveres to the End. Can we be found *blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, if we do not always exercise ourselves *to have a Conscience void of Offence. Blessed is that Servant alone, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* (Matt. xxiv. 46.) It is the Issue of a religious Life that is to determine our everlasting Fate. *Eternal Life* is promised to those only, who by a *patient Continuance in well doing seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality.* (Rom. 2, 7.)

Now the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly. From him it is that we receive those Succours of Grace, that must enable us *to fight the good Fight of Faith, and endure to the End.* And in the Fulness of this Persuasion we find the Apostle elsewhere exhorting us *to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.* (Heb. iv. 16.)

God

God is not only the Fountain of all Goodness, but *ready to give*, and *willing to distribute*, that *imparteth to all Men liberally*, and *upbraideth not*. Nor is this an enthusiastic Notion, but what sober Reason approves and dictates. Can it be doubted, whether God, in whose *Hand are the Hearts of all Men*, cannot act upon the Soul as he does upon the Body, excite good Thoughts, and pious, virtuous Motions, fix the Inconstancy of our Minds, heal the Capriciousness of our Imaginations, suspend the Force of Prejudice and Passion, awaken the Conscience, and persuade the Heart? This has ever been the Faith of Christians. And if we reflect on the extreme Corruption of Men, on the common Inefficacy of Reason, and of future Hopes and Fears to reclaim them, it may be thought, that this exciting, auxiliary Grace is no more than proper and necessary for the Recovery of a Sinner. And though the *Manner*, in which God's Spirit assists and cooperates with our own, is above our Comprehension, yet ought not this to be any Objection

jection to the Reality of this heavenly Influence. Is it not reasonable to think, that Spirit may act on Spirit, as well as Body on Spirit? Cannot a wise and good Man by the Ministry of our Senses convey good and virtuous Notions, and impress them strongly on our Minds? And can that which is possible to Men be impossible with God? Cannot God, who has embodied us in Matter still influence the Soul through it's Covering of Flesh? Or are the other Avenues of the Understanding barred against him? He that made the Eye and Ear can undoubtedly affect the Soul without using those Canals of Sensation appointed solely for our Intercourse with each other, but by no means intended, or capable of hindering God's immediate Access to and Influence upon our Souls.

Let us therefore according to the mentioned Direction of the Apostle *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace*, petitioning for ourselves, and interceding after St. Paul's Example

Example for our Brethren, that *the God of Peace* would *sanctify us wholly*. And great Reason have we to be diligent in this Duty of Prayer; for *this Confidence have we in God* founded in the exprefs Declarations of Scripture, *that, if we ask any Thing according to his Will, he heareth us.* (1. John v. 14.) Now *this is the Will of God, even our Sanctification*: (1. Theff. iv. 3.) And constant, fervent Prayer for our Growth and Perseverance in Holiness, we may be confident, will be heard in Heaven, and rewarded with those present Succours of Grace which we want, and with an infinitely glorious Recompence if we improve them. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* (1. Theff. v. 24.) If we invoke *the Father of Lights* to rescue us from every material Error,---*the Father of Mercies* to pardon our Sins,---*and the God of all Consolation* to relieve our Distresses,---we may be assured, *that all Things* sooner or later *will work together for good to those that love God*;---that as *he withholdeth no good Thing from them that live a godly Life*, so will he re-
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use no Degree of Grace necessary for us to our sincere and constant Prayers for it.--- It is indeed the Duty of those, who are Embassadors in Christ's Stead, to be earnest and frequent in their Prayers for God's Blessing on those that are committed to their Charge. *And God forbid that we should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.---* But, on the other hand, remember the Apostle's Exhortation to his Thessalonians,---*Brethren, pray for us.* Strive, we beseech you, in your Prayers to God for us. Let us, each for himself and for one another, in Faith and Charity, beseech *the God of Peace to sanctify us wholly, and pray God that our whole Body Soul and Spirit be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Amen.

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S E R M O N II.

LUKE, vii. 20.

*Art thou he that should come, or look we
for another?*

THE Words are a Question of the Disciples of John put to our Saviour by the Direction of their Master. There was at the Time, when this Question was asked, a general Expectation in the World of some extraordinary Revolution to happen in it, which Heathen Writers have recorded without understanding it's Meaning. But among the Jews the current Persuasion was, that the *Fulness of Time was at hand*, when God was to *send forth* the Messiah. Upon some miraculous Operations performed by Jesus of

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Nazareth, a Rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and the Disciples of John shewed him of all these Things. Whereupon the Baptist for the Satisfaction of his Disciples sends two of them to Jesus, saying, *art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* Instead of a direct Answer our Saviour bids them *go and tell John what Things they had seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached.* As if he had said: ---Compare these miraculous Works with that Prophecy of the Messiah, (Isa. xxxv. 4, 5, 6. & lxi. 1.) where these Works are made to denote his Person and his Appearance, and then judge, and answer your Question yourselves, whether the manifest Completion of this Prophecy, and it's punctual Accomplishment in my Character, does not most evidently decide and determine, that I am (the *ἐσχατος*) that Prophet at this Time so generally expected to come into the World.

The

The Text with our Saviour's Answer implies and contains this Truth, which I shall endeavour to illustrate;---that Miracles are the Credentials of our Saviour's Mission, and give clear and illustrious Evidence of his being *a Teacher sent from God*.---In the Progress of my Discourse I shall therefore

1.---Shew, that a Series of wonderful uncontested Operations, manifestly above and beyond the Powers of Nature, do plainly demonstrate a Person to be divinely commissioned and *a Teacher sent from God*: And

2.---Enquire into the Use and Necessity of this kind of Evidence.

Now the Force of the Argument consists in this; that Miracles being above, and beyond the Powers of Nature, a Series of such supernatural Events is a Proof of some supernatural Interposition, which must immediately or ultimately be referred to God. For though there are, doubtless, many Be-

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ings

ings invested with natural Powers far above what we see belonging to Man; † yet the Powers of these Beings are certainly limited, as well as those of Man, neither have they a lawless Exercise of these Powers, but are certainly restrained within the Limits which the great Creator has enacted, and which are designed by what we call the Laws of Nature. To imagine that these Beings are enabled with a discretionary Use of natural Powers to over-rule and trample upon the Laws of Nature, and to disturb that Order which the Wisdom of God has planted, shocks and contradicts our Notions of Subserviency and Subjection, in which all Orders and Ranks of Beings, both good and bad, must be supposed to be placed by the great Author and Fountain of all Order and Existence. From hence we are warranted to conclude, that supernatural and miraculous

† The first Verse of the thirteenth Chapter of Deuteronomy seems to intend a Sign or Wonder of Prophecy, something *foretold*, *conjectured*, or *adventurously foretold*, where the Event *casually* verifies the Prediction.

S E R M O N II.

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Operations manifestly shew *the Finger of God*: And we may as justly infer, that our blessed Saviour acted by a divine Appointment from the mighty Wonders which he performed, as that God was the Creator of the World may be deduced from the stupendous Beauty, Order, and Magnificence of the Universe. The mighty Works which our Saviour performed were above all the Powers of Nature. Bad Angels *could* not work them without God's Permission, and *would* not exert them in a Cause, that most evidently opposed every Interest and Inclination of evil Angels. Good Angels, if they acted in this Case, must act by the special Direction of that God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In either View therefore we gather this sure Conclusion, that a Series of miraculous and uncontested Operations, manifestly above and beyond the Powers of Nature, do plainly shew a Person to be divinely commissioned, and *a Teacher sent from God*.

But

But what shall we say then of Miracles that have been wrought by Persons, who either were Aliens from the Christian Cause, or of doubtful Character, or for Purposes unbecoming and unworthy of God's Interposition? As to such Miracles, most of them are generally acknowledged to be fabulous and groundless; and the rest are not supported by reasonable Authority, being done in Corners, without proper Witnesses to prove the Facts, and were none of them professedly wrought in Attestation of any Doctrines, or to prove a Revelation that claimed to be received as coming from God. Fabulous Miracles deserve no Consideration; and such as pretend to the Authority of historical Evidence it will be Time enough to consider, when that Evidence is produced. "Suppose", says a learned Prelate, "there were *the like* historical Evidence for Miracles which are on all Hands acknowledged to be fabulous, to what there is for those acknowledged in Proof of Christianity, which yet is in no wise allowed, but suppose this, the

"Conse-

"Consequence would not be, that the Evi-
 "dence of the latter is not to be admitted.
 "Nor is there a Man in the World who in
 "common Cases would conclude thus. For
 "what would such Conclusion really amount
 "to, but this, that Evidence confuted by
 "contrary Evidence, or any Way overba-
 "lanced, destroys the Credibility of other
 "Evidence, neither confuted, nor overba-
 "lanced. To argue, that because there is,
 "if there were, like Evidence from Testi-
 "mony for Miracles acknowledged false, as
 "for those in Attestation of Christianity,
 "therefore the Evidence in the latter Case
 "is not to be credited; this is the same as
 "to argue, that if two Men of equally
 "good Reputation had given Evidence in
 "different Cases no Way connected, and one
 "of them had been convicted of Perjury,
 "this confuted the Testimony of the
 "other." †

It may therefore be reasonably believed,
 as it is sufficiently proved, that *miraculous*

† Bishop Butler's Analogy, &c. Part 2. Chap. vii. Page 247 &
 248, Qto. Edit,

Operations publicly and unquestionably wrought, and wrought to give Credit to any Person or Doctrine declared to proceed from God, (if such Doctrine be not unreasonable in itself, nor the Miracles confronted and confuted by greater Miracles, or in other Words, if there be Nothing in the Matter of the Revelation, that is evidently contrary to the Principles of natural Religion, nor to any former Revelation, which hath already received a greater and more solemn Attestation from Heaven,) do fully testify what they are alledged to prove; and consequently that no Deduction of Reason, nor Maxim of Philosophy is more certain, than that Jesus of Nazareth, who produced these Credentials, was what he claimed to be considered, *a Teacher sent from God.*

But will Miracles prove him *a Teacher from God*, who publishes Doctrines unworthy of God? Or if the Doctrines are evidently *reasonable and just in themselves*, where is the Want, or what is the Service of this super-

superfluous Evidence, that proves what is already acknowledged, and gives Testimony where the Reason was before sufficiently clear and certain? This leads me

2.---To enquire into the Use and Necessity of this miraculous Evidence.

If the Evidence of Miracles can in any Case be deemed useless or unnecessary, it must be with regard to the moral Law, or the Law of Nature. This Law was doubtless prior to the Christian Revelation, or the Law of Moses, taking it's Date from the Creation of Man, and being enacted in our very Nature, and therefore imagined by the Adversaries of Revelation, as sufficiently certain, and wanting no new Enforcement or Explanation. What Reason unenlightened and unassisted *could* do in tracing and explaining this Law is a Thing of too extensive Consideration for this Place, and difficult to pronounce upon. What it *did* effect is well known, and very far from proving

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ing a further Revelation to be useless. It is certain in fact, that some moral Truths were *lost*, and others *depraved* under the Conduct of this natural Guide ; and that the Belief of the one true God, which lies at the Foundation of all genuine Theism and natural Religion, was almost universally extinguished. Men had *changed the Truth of God into a Lie*, and *worshiped and served the Creature more than the Creator*. And this unnatural Worship produced it's usual Offspring of unnatural and *vile Affections*. Such was the unhappy Fate of unaided human Reason, wilful enough, no doubt, to leave Men without Excuse, and yet weak enough to deserve the Compassion and Support of the *Father of Mercies*, and to make a further Dispensation necessary to guide Men into all moral Truth, and encourage and support them in the conscientious Practice of it. Far be it from any Preacher of Truth to vilify human Reason, which is *the Candle of the Lord*, and by which we are to be directed wherever it gives Light. But let me ask the
greatest

greatest Idolizer of this natural Light, whether in fact Religion was at first reasoned out. The whole of History and Tradition makes for the other Side, that it came into the World by Revelation. If Reason ever manifested the whole Scheme of Virtue, where was this Scheme proposed? Which of all the antient Moralists shall we consult for this entire System of Duty? If the Law of Nature drawn out into all it's Branches of Obligation, and comprehending the whole Circle of moral Virtue, be a merely Utopian Fancy, that never existed in fact, till taught and explained by Revelation; then as Revelation was necessary, so was the Evidence of Miracles to witness the Divinity of that Revelation.

Thus then Miracles have their Use with regard to the Law of Nature considered even as a Matter of Speculation. But considering natural Religion on the side of Practice there is no Question to be made, whether the Testimony of Miracles be not naturally useful. For suppose a Person to

teach natural Religion to a Nation, that had lived in Ignorance or Forgetfulness of it, and to declare himself commissioned by God so to do: Suppose him in proof of his Commission to foretel Things future, which no human Sagacity and Foresight could have guessed at, to calm the Rage of Tempests with a Word, to feed great Multitudes with Bread from Heaven, to cure all Manner of Diseases, and to raise the dead, even himself, to Life again: Would not this give extraordinary and additional Credibility to his Teaching, and be an authoritative Publication, or new Proof of the Law of Nature? It would, as the aforesaid judicious Writer has observed, be a *practical* one of the *strongest* kind, perhaps, which human Creatures are capable of receiving. This wonderful Display of Power would be an immediate Testimony from Heaven, that Virtue is God's Law, and would impart new Force to that awful Expectation, which even Nature furnishes, that God will finally *judge the World in Righteousness, and render to all according to their Works.*

But Christianity is much more than a Republication of natural Religion. It contains a Dispensation of Things not at all discoverable by Reason; and in this View of the Matter we see distinct and particular Reasons for Miracles, to give Mankind Instruction additional to that of Nature, and to attest the Truth of it. We experience in fact, that vicious Inclinations spring up very early, and take deep Root in our Minds, which often end in engrafted Habits of Wickedness. And Scripture represents this State of Mankind as a State of Ruin. Reason prompts this Truth dreadful to guilty Creatures, that *God is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity* with Approbation. But Revelation teaches us, that the supreme Being, who in his *Wrath thinks on Mercy*, will not *be extreme to mark what is done amiss*, but has appointed a new and gracious Dispensation to be carried on by his Son and Spirit for the Recovery and Salvation of Mankind; that he has in his infinite

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Goodness condescended to enter into a new Covenant with his fallen Creatures, by which he stipulates, that if we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who gave his Life for *the Propitiation of our Sins*; if we believe, that the holy Spirit is our Guide and Sanctifier, and live in Obedience to that Revelation, which by his Inspiration he enabled holy Men to leave us in the Scriptures;---upon these Terms God has promised to reward our *patient Continuance in well-doing* with immortal Happiness. And to teach us the Reverence and Love we owe to the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* as well as to *God the Father Almighty*, the Gratitude due to the Redeemer of our Souls from Death, and the awful Fear of *grieving the Holy Spirit whereby we are sanctified and sealed to the Day of Redemption*; for these Ends the blessed Jesus, though *the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, took upon him the Form of a Servant*; and yet in this mean Disguise he asserted a Power superior to that of Nature, cured all Man-
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ner of Distempers with a Word, commanded the Wind and the Sea to be obedient to him, walked upon the Water, fed many thousands with a few Loaves and Fishes, cast out Devils, and raised the Dead. This stupendous Exercise of a Power so far above and beyond the Course of Nature was a most illustrious Evidence that he was indeed *the Son of God*; an Evidence abundantly sufficient to satisfy every well disposed Mind that is a sincere Lover of Truth, and enough to leave the Unbeliever *without Excuse*.

And here then let us seriously consider to what Purpose, and for what End, *God was manifest in the Flesh* by such a Series of Miracles, and the Christian Religion hath such evident Marks of Divinity upon it. It was to shew us by this Expence of Wonders the infinite Importance of Christianity, and the unspeakable Danger of neglecting it. It was to *bring Life and Immortality to Light*, and assure us of what Reason could give no Certainty at all, that the grand Distinction
between

between the righteous and the wicked shall be made at the End of this World; that each shall *then* receive according to his Deserts. Reason did, as it well might, conclude that it should, finally and upon the whole, *be well with the righteous*, and ill with the wicked. But it is Matter of mere Revelation, that this Life only *is the accepted Time and Day of Salvation*, that if we do not here acquire those Virtues and Graces, which are to qualify us for Heaven, and be our Passport to it, all after-attempts will have no Efficacy nor Success. After Death *be that is filthy will be filthy still*, and he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous still, irrecoverably fixed in a State of moral Disorder, and doomed in natural Consequence to the Anguish of *the Worm that never dies*, and *the Fire that never shall be quenched*. And let this have it's just Weight upon our Minds. Let us reflect upon this amazing Mystery, that God, *who at sundry Times and in divers Manners spake to us in Times past by the Prophets*, should *in the last Days speak unto us by*
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S E R M O N II. 33

his Son. Ask now of the Days that are past, which were before us, since the Day that God created Man upon the Earth, and ask from the one Side of Heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such Thing as this great Thing is, or hath been heard like it, that God indeed appeared among Men, and was manifest in the Flesh ; as is evident by Signs and Wonders and mighty Deeds, by Voices from Heaven, by Christ's Resurrection from the Dead, and all the other Witnesses, which have testified this Truth unto the World. Ask again, hath God ever assured Men of any Thing by so many and such evident Testimonies as accompanied our blessed Saviour. Unto us it was shewn, that we might know, that Jesus is the Lord, and beside him there is no other. Out of Heaven he hath made us to hear his Voice that he might instruct us ; (Deut. iv. 36.) and upon Earth he hath shewed us his great Wonders, that every Tongue might confess that Jesus is the Lord to the Glory of God the Father. Believe it therefore, that we must obey the Commands of this wonder-

ful Prophet, or perish; we must hearken to his Voice, or forfeit all Hopes of the Deliverance which he promises. For what will become of us, if the best Institution in the World, God's last attempt for our Welfare, his ultimate Offer of Mercy, the blessed Gospel of the Son of God, be not sufficient to make us good, and fit to be *partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints*? If the Word spoken by Angels, if the Law of Moses was *stedfast*, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just *Recompence of Reward*; how shall we escape, what Possibility is there of Mercy, what Source of Hope, or Refuge from Despair, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them Witness with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost? May the blessed and glorious God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, afford us Grace not to neglect it, and enable us to give the most earnest Heed to the Things we have heard, and to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.

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S E R M O N III.

PHILLIPPIANS iv. 5.

The Lord is at Hand.

THE great Expectation of the Messiah at the Time when our Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the World shews undeniably, that there must have been some express Revelation from God foretelling this great Event, and limiting the Time of his Appearance, which by their Manner of computing the Jews understood to be almost expired at that *Fulness of Time*, when, as the Gospels inform us, *God sent forth his Son born of a Woman*. As this Expectation must have arisen from the Prophecies concerning

the Messiah, and cannot otherwise be accounted for than by supposing such Predictions given in the sacred Writings of the Jews, and universally understood to design and foretel his Coming, it may be no unreasonable, and, I hope, no unuseful Subject of Meditation to consider

1---How general these Hopes and Expectations were at the Time of our blessed Saviour's first Appearance : And

2---What awful Reasons we have to expect likewise, that the same Jesus, who once came into the World to redeem, shall come again to judge it,

For indeed this was not the vain Belief of a few warm Enthusiasts, nor the Persuasion only of those devout Persons, who spake of our blessed Lord to such as *looked for Redemption in Israel*. It was not a Notion that prevailed only among the lowest of the People, who believed that *the Kingdom of God*,
by

by which they meant the Kingdom of the Messiah, *should immediately appear*. It was, in truth, the mature Judgment of those, who were believed to be the wisest and best. The chief Priests, the Scribes, the learned in their Law, they who had made the Scriptures their Study, and were held in the highest Estimation for their Knowledge and Skill in them, all these were unanimously in the same Hope; an Hope, that was universally cherished by the whole Jewish Nation. *Unto this Promise the twelve Tribes, instantly serving God Day and Night*, in full Belief of it's future Verification, and with earnest Prayers for it's Accomplishment, *hoped to come*, as St. Paul told Agrippa, who wanted neither Ability, nor Inclination to contradict him, had he told him untruly.

The Samaritans likewise, how much soever at variance with the Jews in other Points of Religion, agreed with them however in this common Expectation of a Redeemer, and that his Advent was at hand.

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I know that Messias cometh, who is called Christ, said the Woman of Sichar, in which she expressed, no doubt, both her own Hopes, and the Expectation of her Nation. An Expectation not confined to the Jews and Samaritans, but spread moreover wide among the Gentiles, and disseminated as far as the People of the East, from which Quarter the wise Men, or Magi, at the Sight of an unusual Star resorted to Jerusalem *to worship him*!—Nor were they of the Roman Empire Strangers to this Expectation, however derived to them. In the most celebrated of their Poets you have a Description of the happy Times, that should follow the Birth of this expected Person, in Words and Images that bear a most striking Resemblance to those, which we read in the Prophets of the Jewish Nation. † Suetonius, one of their Histo-

† Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans Opinio; esse in † Fatis ut eo tempore Judea profecti rerum potirentur. C. Suet. Tranq. in Vespas. Lib. 8. Sect. 4. Page 735. Edit. Var.

† Fata doth often signify κατ'ἐξοχήν the Responses of the Sybils, which he elsewhere calls Libri Fatales.

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rians, mentions it as an antient and constant Persuasion, that "from Judea should arise the Governours of the World." And† Tacitus, another of them, recites the same Expectation. So general, you see, about the Time of our Saviour's Coming was the Hope of an extraordinary Person to be born; expected by the Heathens to produce an uncommon Revolution in the Manners of Men, and Government of the World; believed among the Jews to be the promised Messiah, *in whom all the Nations of the World should be blessed*; and to be so near at hand that (as † Grotius tells us,) Nehemiah an Hebrew Rabbi about fifty Years before our Saviour declared, that the Time of his Appearance,

† Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis Sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judea rerum potirentur. C. Corn. Tacit. Hist. Lib. 5. Sect. 13. P. 390 & 391. Edit. Jo. Augusti Ernesti.

The Expression in both these Writers seems to be taken from the original Prophecy; *ἐκ σε γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται πνυμενος* See Matth. ii. 6.

† Magister Hebræus Nehumias, qui annis quinquaginta eum præcessit, aperte jam tum dixerit non posse ultra eos quinquaginta annos protrahi tempus Messiz a Daniele significatum. Lib. 5. C. 14. De Veritate Relig. Christ.

accord-

according to Daniel's Prophecy, could not possibly be prolonged beyond the Term of fifty Years.

Such was *the Desire*, or, as the Word may be translated, such was the Expectation of *all Nations*. (Haggai ii. 7.) So plainly foretold, so precisely defined was the Time of his Appearance, and so exactly did the blessed Jesus accomplish the *Word of Prophecy*. Now the same *Word of Prophecy* gives us the clearest Declarations of his second Coming to judge the World, and calls upon us to consider, as I proposed,

2---The awful Reasons we have to expect, and prepare for it.

No one Proposition in holy Scripture is more frequently and plainly asserted than this, that our blessed Saviour will be the Judge of Mankind. We are told expressly, that in the End of all Things *the Son of Man shall come in the Clouds of Heaven with his holy Angels, and sit upon the Throne of his Glory;*

(Matth.

(Matth. xxv. 30, 31.) that *the Trumpet shall sound, and the Graves shall give up their dead, and all that are therein shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done Good to the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil to the Resurrection of Damnation*: (John v. 28, 29.) When being gathered together from the four Winds, from the one End of Heaven to the other, they shall all stand before their great Judge, and receive their last irrevocable Sentence, which shall either crown them with everlasting Glory and Happiness in Heaven, or doom them to everlasting Shame and Torments in Hell.

God indeed for Reasons of Wisdom and Goodness has not revealed the Day of this awful Enquiry into the Manners and Actions of Men. It is offered to our Expectation, wrapt up in Uncertainty and Darkness, that we might be persuaded to live in constant Readiness and Preparation for it. Nay, in the Infancy of Christianity, for the same

wife Reasons, doubtless, did Jesus Christ so discourses to his Disciples concerning it, that they might rather apprehend *the End of all Things* to be *at hand*, and at that Time ready to take place. And accordingly the Apostles in several Exhortations seem to urge Christians with the instant Necessity of a blameless Behaviour from this very Consideration of the Nearness of the general Judgment. So St. Paul in the Text: *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men, the Lord is at hand.* And the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews encourageth Christians to Constancy in their Profession upon the same tremendous Expectation: *Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the Manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, because the Day approacheth.* But whatever Period the Wisdom of God has fixed to the Duration of the present Scene, for one Year more, or for a thousand; yet as this to us is absolutely uncertain, and known only unto God, it will be in all Ages of the World

to the final Conflagration of it a good Argument for Vigilancy, and a State of constant Preparation ; because if we are remiss and careless, the Judge may *come in a Day that we think not of, and at an Hour when we are not aware.*

If indeed there be any Time when Christians have greater Reason than ordinary to expect that God will not be slack to come, it is then surely when *Iniquity abounds*, and *the Love of God and Goodness waxes cold.* Our Saviour asks, *when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith in the Earth ?* Shall not the Profession of Christianity be an unactive one, destitute of good Works, a dead, unavailing Faith, that neither purifies Men's Hearts, nor governs their Lives ? If this be a Sign that *the Judge is at the Door*, let Christians then consider, what indeed is the present Face of the Christian World. Is there a God, the Creator of all Things, and the Father of all Men, who speaks to Mankind both by the Book of Nature and of

Grace, in the still Voice of Reason, and in the louder and plainer Language of Revelation, who has given us a Law, by which we may be saved, and has threatened his *Indignation against all, who do not obey the Truth but obey Unrighteousness?* And how do Men believe these Things? Do not some, *that profess and call themselves Christians*, daily profane the sacred Name of God with impious and horrid Oaths? Do not others lie, and defraud one another without the least Remorse, or Uneasiness of Mind? Do not others for a few, short, unsatisfying Pleasures, for the Madness of a Debauch, for the Smiles of an Harlot, for the Gains of a Moment, risque their everlasting Welfare? ---And do such Men *believe*? Is this the *Faith* that shall *save* a Christian? The Faith of those, whose Faith in the eleventh Chapter to the Hebrews is commended to our Imitation was very different from this. The Faith of Moses was, that he *chose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season; because*

cause he had Respect unto the Recompence of Reward, and endured as seeing him who is invisible. (Heb. xi. 25, 26, 27.) The Faith of the Martyrs was, that they chose to be tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. And the sincere Faith of Christians now will ever have the same Influence, must prevail over the World, subdue the Lusts of the Flesh, and triumph over every Composition of present Gain, and present Pleasure, that opposes the Virtue of a Man, and the Obedience of a Christian. And assuredly no Christian Faith exists, where these Influences are not seen. Be his Profession as it may, every wicked Man is in his Heart an Infidel.

When Noah, that Preacher of Righteousness, denounced God's Judgments against a World that was corrupt, how would you judge of the Faith of those that heard him? Could those who persisted in the same flagitious Practices which provoked this terrible Vengeance,

Vengeance, could they in any Propriety of Language be said to believe him? No. *They eat, they drank*, indulged the same Riot, and persisted in the same sensual Humour, *till the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the Flood came, and destroyed them all.* Now the Gospel still preaches, still denounces God's Judgments against those that disobey him. Another Flood, but not of Waters, a new Deluge of Fire, is threatened against the Earth, and the Workers of Wickedness. *The Heavens and the Earth which are now by the same Word, which overflowed the World with Water, are kept in store, reserved unto a Flood of Fire, against the Day of Judgment and Perdition of ungodly Men.* This is the Day, that shall determine, whether Atheists were Madmen, or Philosophers; whether false Wit, or bold Impudence can cover those, whom *the Rocks and the Mountains cannot cover from the Wrath of God.* At Midnight, when Mankind is wrapt in Sleep and Peace,--at Midnight, of all Hours the most dreadful, lo! the Trumpet sounds,--

and

and proclaims to the quick and dead, *that the Lord is at hand.* The Earth trembles; the Sea and it's Waves roar; the Air thunders; the Heavens are on Fire; all Nature struggles in Convulsions; the Son of Man appears in the Clouds, and *comes flying upon the Wings of the Wind*; Hell from beneath opens, and pours forth it's devouring Flames.

---Awake Sinner---prepare to meet thy God. Behold him cloathed in Garments *white as Snow, sitting on a Throne like the fiery Flame,* and it's wheels as burning Fire, with a fiery Stream issuing out from before him, *thousand thousands ministering to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him,* whilst the Judgment is set, and the Books are opened. (Dan. vii. 9, 10.) Dreadful Day, that is never to know an End. Ah, my God! The Earth---where is it? The Ground on which we stood is gone! Where are the *everlasting Mountains*? Where are *the Rocks to fall on the guilty, and shelter them from him that sitteth upon the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb*? O for a good Conscience! O but
for

for some Respite, for a short Delay to repent, and make our Peace with God. But Time is---alas! no more. The acceptable Day is past. Because God called, and you refused; he now will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear is come, when your Fear is come as a Desolation, and your Destruction as a Whirlwind, sudden and irresistible, when Anguish overwhelms you, and you are just falling into the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone.

And when will Men be wise? Have all the Workers of Wickedness no Knowledge? Is not this Day most plainly foretold? Will it not come, as surely as Christ was born---as surely as you must die? Will it not come, as a Thief in the Night, surprising a careless World? Nigh as the Year is to an End, may not the World end before it? For of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man. The Day is indeed yet to come,---but come it certainly will, and, as our Saviour says, it will come as a Snare on all them that live upon the Face of the whole Earth.

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Be wise therefore in Time. *Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from Day to Day. Be stedfast, and diligent in the Work that is commanded you, in Piety, in Righteousness, in Temperance. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any Time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting, and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares.*

God give us all the Grace to be prepared for it, and by a *patient Continuance in well-doing to wait for it all the Days of our appointed Time* for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N IV.

LUKE ii. 11.

*Unto you is born this Day, in the City of David,
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

THOUGH the Existence of Jesus Christ our Saviour be a Fact the most undoubted in History, attested alike by the Followers and the Enemies of the Religion which he established ; yet not only the Day, but the precise Year of his Birth, hath long been Matter of great Dispute. We learn from St. Jerom, who lived in the fourth Century, that even at that early Period there was no settled Opinion or Certainty in this Affair, and that the World was divided about the true Day, Month, and Year of

his Nativity; there being as many different Opinions concerning it as there was Variety of Traditions. † In vain therefore is it to expect any exact Knowledge of this important Event, as to the precise Time of it. To give you however what Satisfaction I am able upon a Subject that is, I think, rather curious than useful,---I shall enquire

1.---What Information may be gathered from Antiquity concerning the Time of our Saviour's Nativity.

2.---What are the Reasons of appointing the twenty fifth Day of December for the Commemoration of this Nativity: And I shall offer

3.---An Observation more immediately belonging to the Occasion of the present Assembly.

That a Day was observed to the pious Remembrance of our Saviour's Birth, we

† See Bishop Chandler's Vindication, P. 447.

have very early Intimations among ancient Writers. The Antiquity of this Festival may be traced up to the second Century; it being mentioned by Theophilus, Bishop of Cæsarea, who lived about the Time of the Emperor Commodus. That it was solemnly kept in the Reign of Dioclesian, in the third Century, there is a sad and memorable Instance upon Record. For Dioclesian, who kept his Court in Nicomedia, being informed that the Christians were assembled in great Multitudes to celebrate the Nativity of our Saviour, ordered the Doors to be shut, and the Church to be set on fire, which in a short time consumed both the People and the Building to Ashes. † The Churches of the East observed this Festival on the sixth Day of January, celebrating both the Birth and the Epiphany of our Saviour on that Day. A Custom this, which they said was derived to them from the Apostle St. James; and it will hardly bear a Dispute, that the general Practice was conformable thereto for some

† See Dr. Cave's Primitive Christianity, P. 124.

Centuries at least. Dr. Cave indeed seems to think, that this Practice was no where observed but in the East, and that only till they were better informed by the Churches in the West. But surely this Remark was not well considered. For where would you seek for the Original of a Christian Practice but where Christianity itself had it's Original, in the East? The Doctrines of our Religion flowed from this Spring, and therefore the Apostolical Usages, it may fairly be presumed, were derived from no other Sources. And this indeed † Dr. Cave himself seems to be sensible of, when speaking of the Controversy in the Church about the Time of celebrating our Lord's Resurrection; for there he seems to allow, that the Western Churches pretended only an Apostolical Tradition in opposition to the Churches of the East. The first Account we have of the Observation of Christ's Nativity on the twenty fifth Day of December ascends no higher than to the Days of Pope Julius in the middle of

† Dr. Cave's Primitive Christianity, P. 119.

the third Century. And Chrysoſtom in a Sermon pronounced profeſſedly on the Occaſion acknowledges, that the Cuſtom was brought from Rome about ten Years before. The Arguments uſed by this Father of the Church to prove that the twenty fifth Day of December was really the Day of our Saviour's Nativity are ſuch, that in Mr. † Nelson's Opinion there is little Reason to doubt but that the Day, which has always been obſerved in the Church of England, is the very Day: Yet whoever carefully examines will find, that the good Father depends upon Rhetorick more than Reason for the Proof of his Point. He cites no antient Record for it; and what he calls his Demonſtration of the Point in Queſtion is founded on a groſs Miſtake, that Zacharias the Father of John was *high Priest*, and was entered into the *holy of holies*, when the Angel Gabriel appeared to him. It is evident from a ſingle Glance upon the Hiſtory of this Fact in St. Luke, that Zacharias on the contrary was a common

† Faſts and Feſtivals, P. 60.

Priest and of the Class of Abia, one of the twenty four which David (1. Chron. xxiv. 10.) appointed for the Temple Service; "each Course being divided into seven Classes, "and each Class serving it's Day at the Temple, and each Priest of that Class having "his Part in the Service appointed him by "Lot." † The Conclusion therefore drawn by Chrysostom for the Establishment of our Saviour's Birth on the twenty fifth of December is as groundless as the Assertion upon which it is built.

It is at present universally agreed amongst the learned, that the common Æra, or Reckoning from the Birth of Christ far from being exact falls short of the true Account, by two Years as Baronius and Scaliger think, by five Years according to Petavius, a very exact Chronologer, or even six according to the Opinion of some others. Now this Difference, as † Dr. Prideaux observes,

† Dr. Prideaux's Connection, Vol. 4 P. 913.

† Preface to Vol. I. P. 3.

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arose from hence, that this Reckoning was not brought into Use till the five hundred and twenty seventh Year after the Birth of Christ : So that a Mistake in fixing the first Year of it is not to be wondered at, But had the Month, and the Day of the Month, when this glorious Event came to pass, been precisely mentioned according to the Jewish Account of Time, we should not yet have been enabled thereby to have determined the precise Time of this Event according to our own Way of Reckoning. The Reason of this is given by the same learned † Dean Prideaux, who was a Master in this Way. For till the Year three hundred and sixty after our Lord's Birth the Jews had no certain Rules of Reckoning. Their Months were Lunar ones ; so that their Year fell short of our's by eleven Days. Hence their Year began eleven Days too soon ; and this obliged them to insert a Month extraordinary once in every third Year, and sometimes in two years, as the Situation of the Equinox

† Preface to Vol. I. P. 13.

required it, in order to the proper Observation of the Passover. But this Intercalation they did not always exactly make, varying often from the Astronomical Truth. And this having been their Way, till Rabbi Hillel about the Middle of the fourth Century fixed the Jewish Calendar upon the certain Foundations of Astronomy, “we cannot,” as the learned † Dean observes, “when we find the Day of any Jewish Month mentioned in the Scriptures, or in Josephus, reduce it exactly to it’s Time in the Julian Year, or there fix it any nearer, than within the Compass of a Month sooner or later.”

With all these Disadvantages let us enquire how far we may be able to fix the Time of our blessed Lord’s Nativity. And here, since Conjecture is to supply the Place of Knowledge, no more can be expected than ingenious Guesses. Our very learned Lightfoot, who was a great Master of Rabbinical Learning, is of Opinion, that the

‡ Preface to Vol. I. P. 14.

Time of this Event fell on the Jewish Month Tifri, which answers to part of our Month of September, † and makes some judicious Observations on what St. Luke tells us, (Ch. ii. v. 8.) that *there were in the Country of Bethlehem Shepherds abiding in the Field, keeping Watch over their Flocks by Night.* ‡---Now the Jews had two Sorts of Flocks, one which they called domestic or Flocks of the Household, and the other Flocks of the Desert. Their domestic Flocks fed at a small Distance from their Towns, and returning at Night were housed in the Towns: The other called the Flocks of the Desert left the Towns after the Passover, and returned at the Time of the first Rain. The Time of this Rain is thus explained by the very ingenious and learned Sir Thomas Brown, as the received Construction of *the former and latter Rain. I will give you,* said God by Moses to the Israelites, (Deut. xi. 14.) *the Rain of your Land in his due Season, the*

† Dr. Lightfoot's Chronicle of the Times, &c. An. 3000. Vol. I. P. 74.

‡ Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon St. Luke, Vol. II, P. 390 and 391.

first

first Rain and the latter Rain. “For the
 “first Rain fell in the Seed-time about Oc-
 “tober, and was to make the Seed to root;
 “the latter was to fill the Ear, and fell in
 “Abib, or March, *the first Month*; for so it is
 “expressed: (Joel ii. 23.) *And he will cause*
 “*to come down for you the Rain, the former Rain,*
 “*and the latter Rain in the first Month,*”†
 that is, the Month of Abib wherein the
 Passover was observed. From these Facts
 compared with the mentioned Passage in St.
 Luke it is natural to conclude with Light-
 foot, that our blessed Saviour was born after
 the Passover and before the End of Oc-
 tober.

Hitherto we have seen neither Proof, nor
 Conjecture, by which we can probably judge,
 that the true Time of our Saviour's Birth
 fell on the twenty fifth Day of December.
 What therefore remains to be done? Since
 neither sacred Scripture, nor profane Histo-
 ry can be of any Service in this Enquiry,

† Vulgar Errors, Book 6. P. 237.

what indeed can we more reasonably do, than consult Tradition, and, if Tradition be not consistent, to make Choice of that which appears to be the best founded. Now amidst different and interfering Traditions it will easily be allowed, that the more antient Traditions are, when other Circumstances are equal, to be preferred to those of later Date, especially if they carry with them a greater Degree of Probability. The Tradition which places the Nativity of our Lord on the twenty fifth Day of December goes no higher than the Beginning of the fifth or the latter End of the fourth Century at the farthest, and contrary to the Text of St. Luke, and Lightfoot's very judicious Explication of it, places it in the very Depth of Winter. But if we go two Centuries higher, that is to the End of the second Century after Christ, we shall find that Clement of Alexandria, one of the most learned Fathers of the Church, speaking professedly, and as a Chronologer, of the Nativity of our Saviour, mentions two Opinions, which place it in the Spring ;

one

one on the twentieth of the Month of April, the other on the twentieth of the Month of May. Whether the Flocks were in the Desert on the twentieth of April may be disputed; but most certainly they were on the twentieth of May: And this latter seems to be the Opinion, to which Clement himself is most inclined. "Those," says he, "who propose with the *greatest Diligence and Accuracy* † not only the Year, but also the Day of the Birth of our Saviour, affirm, that it happened in the twenty eighth Year of the Reign of Augustus on the twenty fifth of the Month Pachon." Now the twenty eighth of Augustus begins three Years and four Months before our common Æra, at which Time the twenty fifth of Pachon answered to the twentieth of the Month of May according to the Julian, which was the English Account of Time;

† περιεργασίαν---See Bibliothéque Germanique V. II. Art. 3. by Vignoles, to whom the Author acknowledges himself to be greatly obliged for his Collections upon this Subject.

a Time when the Flocks were undoubtedly in the Desert, and a Time too that was much more proper for the Taxing or Enrolment, at which our Lord according to St. Luke was born, than the middle of Winter. This, I believe, is the oldest Account of the Matter now extant, and yet perhaps it is too uncertain to lay any great Weight upon it.---
I proceed to enquire

2.---What are the Reasons of appointing the twenty fifth of December for the Commemoration of our Lord's Nativity.

Now this Establishment was a prudent Condescension and Compliance to the Prejudices of the World in those Days, the Church accommodating it's Festivals to the Humours of it's Converts. If the Day of our Saviour's Birth was not certainly known, then it was indifferent on what Day it was celebrated; and here St. Paul's Practice certainly deserved Imitation *to become all Things to all Men*, and by every innocent Accommodation

modation of our Manners to the Prepossessions of others to win them over, and secure their Attachment to Christianity. Prejudices when engrafted or inveterate are more easily diverted than subdued. And when the Stream ran too strong to be banked out, the Wisdom of the Church endeavoured to turn it into a new Channel.

Now two eminent Festivals at this very Season of the Year were celebrated, one among the Heathens, and the other among the Jews. The latter of these Festivals a learned German, Olderman, gives as the Reason for the fixing Christmas to this Season; and Hardouin is no less positive, that the true Reason was a Compliance with the Humour of the Gentiles. But surely it is more rational to suppose, that both these Festivals were intended to be swallowed up in the Celebration of our Lord's Nativity, that both Jews and Gentiles might rejoice, as they had greater and better Reason to rejoice, for the Birth of the *Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.*

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Now Hardouin has very learnedly proved, that among the Romans the twenty fifth of December was always celebrated as the Nativity of their God of Day, or the Sun. On this Day an antient Roman Calendar has the Words---*Natalis invicti*---the Birth-Day of the invincible ; - a Name which Julian the Apostate likewise gives to the Persian God Mithra, or the Sun. And since the precise Time and Day of our Saviour's Birth is unknown and uncertain, could there be a more natural or wise Appointment than to apply to the honour of our Lord a Festival, that was observed by the Heathens in honour of the Sun ? If it be called *the Birth-Day of the invincible*, who is so invincible as our Lord, who hath subdued Death, and *led Captivity captive* ? Or if it be *the Birth-Day of the Sun*,---(the Winter Solstice being fixed by Julius Cæsar to the twenty fifth of December, whence the Sun returning and reviving with new Warmth and Vigour was thought to be as it were born again,)---was not our Lord also *the Sun of Righteous-*

ness, who, as the Prophet Malachi expresses it, (Ch. iv. 2.) shall arise to those that fear his Name with healing in his Wings?

The Feast among the Jews, which was observed on the twenty fifth of their ninth Month, called Cisleu or Casleu, was *the Feast of the Dedication*, which fell likewise about the Time of the Winter Solstice. It was instituted by Judas Maccabeus. † For Antiochus Epiphanes having taken and profaned the Temple, Judas Maccabeus afterwards defeated the Generals of Antiochus, recovered Jerusalem, purified the Temple, and ordained this Festival to be annually observed in memory of his Success, and God's Mercies to the Jewish Nation in restoring the Temple Worship. It was this Festival, that Christ honoured with his Presence at Jerusalem, as St. John tells us, (John x. 22.) when *it was Winter*, and which from the Time of it's Institution was ever after celebrated without Interruption till the

† See 1. Maccabees iv. 59.

Romans destroyed both the City and Temple, and put a final Period to the whole Jewish Worship. Now surely we cannot but suppose, that the Appointment, which celebrates our Saviour's Nativity at this very Season of the Year, was intended as a prudent Condescension to the Prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles: And as it was customary for both, upon different Views, to abstain from Labour, and to indulge themselves in Festivities and Rejoicings at this Season of the Year, Provision was hereby made, that their Joy might be directed to a nobler End, to celebrate the Memory of *the Word*, who was *made Flesh*, and *came into the World to save Sinners*.

I have now, it may reasonably be hoped, removed the common Prejudices in favour of the twenty fifth of December as the real Birth-Day of our blessed Redeemer. But to obviate every Difficulty, and to reconcile you to the new Establishment, I shall proceed to make

3---An Observation more immediately belonging to the Occasion of the present Assembly.

It is a popular Prejudice that by sinking eleven Days in the last Year the twenty fifth Day of December is made to fall on the fifth of January. Many therefore out of a good Intention, I doubt not, think this Day sacred to the Commemoration of our Lord's Nativity. But this is indeed a mere Mistake. Were the twenty fifth of December the real Birth-Day of our Saviour; yet the true twenty fifth is that which the Law of the Land has appointed to be observed as such, and dedicated to the Honour of the Messiah's Nativity. The Occasion of the common Mistake I will briefly explain. The Year does really consist of three hundred and sixty five Days, five Hours, and forty nine Minutes. But for a round Number, the odd Hours and Minutes have been always reckoned with us as really amounting to six whole
Hours

Hours. Six Hours every four Years make a natural Day ; which is therefore inserted in February. But then there is, you see, in every Year a real Mistake by reckoning eleven Minutes more than the Year actually consists of. Now eleven Minutes in every hundred and thirty one Years make a whole Day ; so that after every hundred and thirty one Years Christmas Day is kept a Day later than it really ought to be. In the Council of Nice holden in the Year three hundred and twenty five the Vernal Equinox fell on the twenty first of March. Owing to this reckoning of a Day too much in every hundred and thirty one Years it is, that according to our last Year's Almanacks the Vernal Equinox fell on the ninth of March, that is, eleven Days later ; for in fourteen hundred and twenty eight Years, which have passed since that Council, one hundred and thirty one is found almost eleven Times. You see therefore that to keep the Equinoxes at a fixed Period, and to make the Year consistent with

with itself, the late Regulation of it by Parliament was a very necessary one, and that the true twenty fifth of December was the very Day lately appointed to be observed in Commemoration of our Lord's Nativity.

I have now done with what I proposed to enquire into, and have shewed you, that there is no certain Information to be collected from Antiquity concerning the precise Year, or Month, or Day, on which the blessed Jesus *took upon him the Seed of Abraham*, and was born into the World; that all the most probable Tradition of Antiquity, and the Narration of St. Luke concur to place it in a very different Time of the Year from the common Estimation; that if the twenty fifth of December was the real Day of his Nativity, yet by reason of reckoning a Day too much every hundred and thirty one Years we have hitherto kept this Festival too late by eleven Days.---Let me now exhort you to submit to reasonable Authority, and to avoid every Thing that would occasion unnecessary Distinctions

Distinctions or Divisions. Were the Feast of Christmas, or the Time of observing it, appointed by divine Institution, there would then indeed be a just Objection against any Alteration. But, since it is only by the Authority of the Church, there is no Room to take Exceptions; and wherever the Church placeth it, there it is well and rightly observed.

The Festival of the Dedication among the Jews was instituted by Men uninspired and without divine Authority; yet Christ honoured it with his Presence, and came to Jerusalem for the Celebration, which implies at least his Approbation of it. From hence therefore it may very justly be inferred, that Festivals in memorial of public Blessings may be appointed by the Church, and that it's Members are bound to the pious Commemoration of them. And surely the Nativity of our Saviour is an Event of all others the most worthy of our devoutest Remembrance.

But

But *how* should this Feast be kept? Not surely with wicked Mirth, and indecent Riot; for this is unworthy, not only of Christianity, but of human Nature. Christ was born, and *the Kindness and Love of God our Saviour appeared to Men, teaching us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live sober, and righteous, and godly in the World.* Is Drunkenness therefore a proper keeping of the Feast? Shall the unjust and unrighteous be zealous for the Commemoration of Christmas? Shall those that forget God, and forsake his House, and *obey not the Gospel*,---shall the impious, and those that *take God's Name in vain*, pretend a Concern for the due Celebration of this blessed Festival? Alas! my Brethren, *God is not mocked.* Instead of remembering the Birth of the blessed Jesus, unless such Men reform their Lives, better it were for them, that neither Jesus Christ nor they themselves had ever been born.---To conclude, let us at all Times, and every Day of our Lives with thankful Hearts reflect on this amazing Love and

Condescension

Condescension of God in *sending forth his Son born of a Woman to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* Let us more especially on the Day appointed for the solemn Celebration of it offer *the Sacrifice of Righteousness* to God, and rejoice before him with *a perfect Heart.* And that we may be Partakers of that *Life and Immortality* which he *brought to Light,* let us be *stedfast and unmoveable* in our Duty, *always abounding in the Work of the Lord,* forasmuch as we know that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord.---God give us the Grace to do so, for how shall we escape, if we neglect, or abuse so great Salvation.

S E R M O N V.

JOB ii. 10.

*Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and
shall we not receive Evil?*

G O D who gave us our Lives has given them subject to a Probation and Trial, as well of the Sincerity of our Virtue, as to exercise and improve it. And one of those Methods by which he awakens our Reason, and fixes our Thoughts to Religion and Seriousness, is the Affliction with which he visits us. This, in some degree, is the common Lot of all Men. While the poor and necessitous are plentifully stored with Uneasiness and Trouble, the most exalted Stations in their greatest Affluence are yet not entirely exempted from this common Inheritance,

to which every Son of Adam is born. More particularly is this the Portion of Christians, who are the Sons of God : And *what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?* They must *through many Tribulations* make their Way to *the Kingdom of God.*

A right Improvement therefore of those Afflictions, wherewith God sooner or later is pleased to try us all, is one great Business which we are to labour, and transact in this World. And for our Comfort under them I shall attempt to convince you,

1---That Afflictions come from God.

2---That *the Captain of our Salvation*, whose Example we must follow, was *made perfect through Sufferings.*---And

3---That our short and *light Afflictions* will be rewarded with an *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

Men

Men earnestly bent to seek the Favour of God and the Happiness of Heaven will be chiefly solicitous to know what the Will of God is, and whether they are employed in discharging it. But whilst we are in an afflicted State, innocently suffering with and for the sake of a good Conscience, unquestionably we are doing our appointed Duty, and *suffering according to the Will of God.* Are you poor and necessitous? Remember--- it is the Creator and Father of Man, that *maketh rich and maketh poor.* Are you weary and heavily laden with the Difficulties and Hardships of Life? Be assured, that *Affliction cometh not out of the Ground,* but is ordered by the infinite Wisdom of God to promote the real Advantage of all Men, by producing serious Virtue and *the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness.*---And moreover, God *will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able.* Your great Enemy has his Commission limited. The utmost he can do is to rob us of the Comforts of this World. But of the
Comfort

Comfort of a good Conscience he cannot deprive us without our own Fault, nor of the Certainty of God's Favour and blessed Acceptance, if we faithfully persist in the Discharge of our Duty.

You may fret indeed, and murmur at your Lot; but still *Man is born to Trouble*. Let the discontented grow impatient and cast away their Hope: Let the *Lovers of Pleasure* be in despair when Affliction seizes them: Let those to whom *the Lot is fallen in a fair Ground*, and who are therefore ready to fancy themselves privileged from Sorrow, let them be vehement, and outrageous in their Grief: Take all the Care, and be as diligent as you can to *remove Sorrow from your Hearts, and put away Evil from your Flesh*; (Eccles. xi. 10.) it is yet true, that Affliction at one Time or other will certainly find you out. *This is a Travail*, as the wise Man observes, *which God hath given to the Sons of Men to be exercised in it*. (Eccles. iii. 10.) And those that fly from Uneasiness will not
be

be able to shut out their own unquiet Passions. The Spectre of Death will be sure to haunt them. The Dread of that Day when they must depart hence, and give Account of themselves to God, will not fail to overtake and oppress their Spirits. For this is the Lot of all Men, as much of those who are *cloathed in Purple* and fare deliciously, as of others who are covered with Rags and in want of Necessaries.

In this indispensable Necessity of suffering what God is pleased to impose, how wise and happy is he, who knowing that *God's Will is done*, when he patiently receives the Cup of Bitterness, can say, as David on a different Occasion did; *my Heart is ready, O God, my Heart is ready?*

Such at all Times have been the Sentiments and Tempers of those great and good Men, whom the Scriptures propose as our Examples. Were they stripped of their Fortunes? *The Lord gave, says Job, and the Lord*

Lord bath taken away. Were they reviled and slandered? So *let Shimei curse, said David, let him curse, for the Lord bath bidden him.* Had Christians but the same pious Submission to the Will of Heaven, what could disturb the calm Devotion of our Souls? Not the rash Censures and Calumnies of Men: We should esteem *it* a small Thing, as it really *is*, to be *judged of Man's Judgment*, assured of a more impartial Sentence before *the Judge of all the Earth*, who will certainly *do right*, and vindicate every injured Character. Nor could Death dismay, however busy around us, knowing that our Days are all numbered, that God, when he pleased, brought us into this World, and in his own good Time will take us out of it. You are, perhaps, unsuccessful in the World, and industrious in vain. But remember--that Wealth is but the Baggage of Virtue; and that *when you die, you shall carry nothing away with you.* Perhaps false Friends have done you evil Offices. But such is the common Lot of worthy Men---to have Evil re-
turned

turned them for Good-Will. Are we friendless and houseless? Yet if all this be endured with Innocency and Patience, there is yet a Friend that *will never leave us nor forsake us*; and when *our earthly Tabernacle is dissolved*, when this Body shall return to the Dust out of which it was taken, *we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* (2. Cor. v. 1.) Whatever in short afflicts us, let this be our Reflection upon it;---*it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* Such indeed is *our bounden Duty*; for we are *predestinate to be conformed to the Image of Christ, who was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief.*---And this was the next Point to be considered, namely,

2--- That *the Captain of our Salvation*, who is our Model and Example, was *made perfect through Sufferings.*

Whatever Calamities befall us, if we search the Scriptures, we shall find there many instructive Examples of Patience, Examples

of Men *subject to like Passions* with ourselves, and struggling with the same Distresses, yet bravely suffering the severest Strokes of Adversity, sustaining their Spirits with conscious Integrity, and a chearful Sense of that providential Care, that steers the Course of Events and makes *all Things work together for Good to them that love God*. What, in short, is there most grievous in Distress? The Loss of worthy and tenderly beloved Children? But in the Mother of the Maccabees we see, that this is not beyond the Patience of the softer Sex. Is it the Loss of Liberty, which one boldly calls our *civil Salvation*? But who more deserved a Privilege from this, and yet suffered it with less Impatience, than the innocent Joseph? Or would we contemplate every Instance of Suffering short of Death, various and complicated in it's kind, severe and extreme in it's degree? View it then in Job, when deprived of his Children, robbed of his Fortunes, and wounded in his Health: And yet you have heard of his Patience, how on his Dunghill he maintained his Integrity.

Had

Had we only these *Examples of suffering Affliction and of Patience* (James v. 10) we could not surely hope for better Treatment than better Men have experienced, or see Reason to *think it strange concerning any Trial that is to try us, as if some strange Thing had happened unto us.* But when we look farther, and cast our Eyes towards *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, what Evil or Affliction is there which he did not suffer? Exposed to the severest Necessities of Life he sometimes wanted Bread; *he hungered*, say the Evangelists; he was poor, so poor as *not to have where to lay his Head.* Sensible to all the Anxieties and Distresses of our frail Being he *wept*, he was dejected and sorrowful, *exceeding sorrowful even unto Death.* And though of perfect Virtue, *without Spot or Blemish*, yet was he seized like a Thief or a Murderer, betrayed by a perfidious Disciple, and abandoned by all the rest, *led bound first to Annas, then to Caiaphas, then to Pilate, then to Herod, then back again to Pilate,* and though declared to be innocent,

yet

yet condemned as a Malefactor, and after enduring a thousand Insults and Indignities, being *buffeted, spit upon, and scourged*, was led out at last to suffer on the Cross the infamous, painful Death of the vilest Offenders.

Do we complain that we have been kind to the unthankful, and received Evil for Good? So was the blessed Jesus treated; *he came unto his own and his own received him not*, rejected even by those whom he came to save, and rewarded for his Kindness with the Death of the vilest Slaves. Men think it unsufferably hard to have *their Good evil spoken of*, to be blamed and reviled when they have behaved irreproachably. But so was our great Lord and Master before us reviled, yet *not reviling again*, when he suffered he threatened not, but *committed himself to him who judgeth righteously*. Little Reason have sinful Creatures to repine, and be impatient under the Afflictions of Life, if we consider that the Redeemer of our Souls tasted of the same unpleasant Cup, and hath drunk the
Dregs

Dregs of this bitter Potion. All the Grief of a Man afflicted, all the Terrors of one broken in Heart he became a Prey to in the fatal Garden, where he was betrayed to his Enemies.

What a Tempest of conflicting Passions did then vex his Soul? How is he the Sport of Misery, distressed betwixt the Love of his Duty, and the Agony of performing it? You would think him unable to rest in any Posture: One while he is stretched on the Ground, then rising in a sudden Start of Agony: Agitated with such a Variety of convulsing Passions he yet pours forth his Soul in Resignation,---*Father, if this Cup cannot pass from me, except I drink it, thy Will be done.*

Alas! what an Aggravation was it of his Distress, when he foresaw the dreadful Hour of God's Wrath, when the Extremity of his Suffering would force that bitter Exclamation,---*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken*

faken me ! The big Grief overpowers him, and bursts out at every Pore. His Sweat is as it were great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground.

To some it has been Matter of Offence and Cavil, that so much Disconsolation should appear in our Saviour as his Sufferings drew nigh. Many Persons of no Eminence in Virtue, or Distinction in Life, have met Death in it's worst Forms of Terror, not only with Intrepidity, but with Chearfulness. But Obedience is then surely most perfect when the Temptations that oppose it are the strongest. Natural Courage is not a moral, but a merely constitutional Quality. And Nothing shews the absolute Distress and Resignation of our blessed Lord so advantageously as---his Temper soft and susceptible, and liable to strong Impressions of Fear, his extreme Sensibility of the Agonies of dying, and yet his willing Submission to a Death of the greatest Terror and Torture.

He

He gave indeed his *Life a Ransom for all*. But how many would reject the Offer of his Blood, *turn the grace of God into Lasciviousness*, and perish in defiance of God's Goodness? And this undoubtedly was a grievous Addition to *the Bitterness of Death*, to foresee all that Wickedness, which would infallibly precipitate those whom he loved more than his own Life into *devouring Flames*.

Great Reason had he therefore to cry out--
My Soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death. How many mad, miserable Creatures will yet die in contempt of my Blood, die for infamous Pleasures, that will *put me again to an open Shame*? How many will prefer Drunkenness to everlasting Joys, love this World more than Heaven and Happiness, and seek the Pleasures and Splendours of Life more than *the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*? Behold a Christian wiping off the Water of his Baptism, and renouncing
ing

ing his Saviour for a Song, for a little Gain, for the malignant Pleasure of Revenge. See how Men stab their Redeemer to the Heart by Oaths and Curses, and crucify their blessed Lord afresh by Murders, by Poisonings, by Wars and Desolations, by all the Arts of Destruction, that can make this World a Theatre of Misery, and one universal *Field of Blood*.

A good Man cannot think over such a Scene of Horrors without melting with Compassion: Much less could the best of Men, even *the Man Christ Jesus*, our great and most affectionate Friend, who loves us much better than we do ourselves. In that dismal Hour, and *the Power of Darkness*, when he was *betrayed*, insulted, arrayed in mock Majesty, and crowned with *Thorns*, nailed at length to the Cross, and expiring under the Agonies of that cruel Death, what added no doubt, to the Intensity of his Sufferings, and stuck the Dagger deeper into his Heart, was the present View of all the past and future

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ture Wickedness of Men, and of those endless Torments to be inflicted on those for whom he shed his dearest Blood, and valued not his Life to save. *Is it Nothing*, to apply to our blessed Lord those Lamentations of the Prophet, *is it Nothing to you all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the Day of his fierce Anger. For these Things I weep; mine Eye, mine Eye runneth down with Water, because the Comforter that should relieve my Soul is far from me; my Children are desolate, because the Enemy hath prevailed.* (Lament. i. 12--16.)

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the Flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same Mind, and commit the keeping of your Souls to God in well-doing. Wherefore indeed should the living Man complain, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins? If we suffer, it is no more than we deserve. And yet

3---If we suffer with Patience, for God and in his Cause, our short and light Afflictions will

VOL. II. N work

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work out for us a far exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

And this surely is Encouragement enough, that will abundantly indemnify us, whatever we shall endure for the sake of Righteousness. There is no Man, says our blessed Lord, who hath left House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive now in this Time an hundred-fold, in that Peace of God which passeth all Understanding, and in the World to come eternal Life. (MARK. X. 29, 30.) Thus was Moses encouraged, and therefore did he chuse to suffer Affliction with the People of God rather than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season. This likewise it was, that fortified the first Christians against all the Malice of Men ingenious in Cruelties. They believed themselves well-paid, if through many Tribulations they might enter at last into the Kingdom of God. And surely they judged wisely. For what is more evidently right than to take the greatest

greatest Care of the longest Duration, and be content to endure a short Affliction, that we may enjoy an endless and unspeakable Felicity? So let us reckon therefore, *that the Sufferings of the present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us. Let them that suffer according to the Will of God commit their Souls to him in well-doing as into the Hands of a faithful Creator.* As Jesus died on the Cross for our Sins; so let us *crucify the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; whilst we look not at the Things which are seen, but the Things which are not seen: For the Things which are seen, all the Pleasures and all the Evils of the present Life are temporal only, and of short Duration; but the Things which are not seen, the Joys and Sorrows after Death, are eternal.

May God give us just Apprehensions of those everlasting Sorrows, and enable us by his Grace to seek after the Happiness of Heaven by a patient Continuance in well-doing for the sake of his blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N VI.

JOHN xx. 29.

*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet
have believed.*

THERE is no Point of Faith more important to Christianity, and of which it more concerned the Apostles to produce a substantial Proof, than the Resurrection of our blessed Saviour. To this as to the supreme and decisive Evidence, that he was a *Teacher sent from God*, our Lord himself appeals. As oft as the Jews called upon him to *shew them a Sign from Heaven*, they are referred to the *Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, and to the Resurrection of his Body after they
had

had taken away his Life. Without a proper Assurance therefore of this, *vain*, as the Apostle observes, would be the *Faith* of Christians, and *vain* would be their Hopes of Acceptance through the Blood of Jesus. This great Event the Apostles urged constantly as the strongest Proof, *that God had made that same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified both Lord and Christ.* Acts (ii. 36.) And when a new Apostle was to be chosen to *take part of that Ministry from which Judas by Transgression fell,* the Reason mentioned is the Necessity, that *one should be ordained to be a Witness with the eleven of his Resurrection:* (Acts i. 22.) As if the Resurrection were the main Point which it behoved them to support and prove. And indeed the Resurrection of our Lord is a Demonstration, that *God was his Father*, and that he spake to Mankind by his Mouth.---But is there now sufficient Evidence of this important Article; and have we just Ground to believe that Jesus, who *died for our Sins, is risen again for our justification?*---The Evangelist in the Chapter

of

of the Text gives a very plain Narrative of this Event, of which the Apostles had repeated Assurance. And *blessed* indeed, in many respects, *blessed* were the *Eyes* that *saw*, and the *Ears* that *heard* him, for they saw and heard and believed. But let not succeeding Generations of Men complain, because they receive not the same kind of Evidence, and are not convinced by their *Senses*. The Proof of Christ's Resurrection by the *Testimony* of the Apostles is still indeed satisfactory and full, abundantly full to all the Purposes of Conviction. Where there is Industry to search after, and Willingness to embrace the Truth, there can be no reasonable Ground of Disbelief. And there is also a peculiar Merit and Reward belonging to our Acquiescence and Assent on these Grounds of Faith. Blessed even beyond the Apostles, in this respect, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*.

Of the Occasion of these Words the Chapter will inform you. It arose from the unreasonable

reasonable Incredulity of one of the Disciples, which our blessed Saviour nevertheless for the Satisfaction of an honest doubting Mind condescended to remove by giving the scrupulous Apostle an Evidence in his own Way. The Design of them is however to caution us against Unbelief, and against the Hope of any future *extraordinary* Evidence for the Cure of it. And because there is a *Blessedness* annexed to a sincere Faith in the Scripture Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus, founded as it is on the *Testimony* of the Apostles, in order to strengthen our Faith in this great Article of the Christian Religion, I shall make it my Business to explain the Force and Evidence of this *Testimony*, and to shew the solid Assurance it gives us, though we *have not seen*, yet to *believe*.

Now in order to establish the *Testimony* of the Apostles two Circumstances are indispensably required;---first, that the Apostles *were not deceived themselves*;---and secondly, that they were under the Influence of every
Motive

Motive to speak the Truth and Nothing but the Truth, and had *no Intention of deceiving others*. The first Circumstance secures the Disciples themselves from all Imposition and Mistake. It supposes them fully informed of the Matter of Fact; that it was fairly proposed to their Observation, carefully examined, and thoroughly comprehended. The second assures us of their Fidelity in delivering the Account of this Fact to others; that they honestly declared what they had faithfully observed, and were as strictly careful in reporting the Resurrection of their Master, as they had been scrupulously exact in examining all the Circumstances, and satisfying themselves of the Truth of it.

I---We have sufficient Reason to believe, that the Disciples *were not deceived themselves*.

They were chosen by our Saviour to be the Publishers of his Doctrines, and to spread the Knowledge of the Gospel through

all Nations. They were likewise informed beforehand of the Difficulties and Dangers which they were to encounter, and were told what they must do, and what they must suffer for the sake of Christ and in support of his Cause; that instead of gaining Riches, or enjoying Pleasure, they would be oppressed with Poverty, and afflicted with Distresses; that instead of making Friends, or gaining Reputation, the Contempt and Hatred of the World, the bitterest Persecutions awaited them in all Places, and Death itself in it's worst Forms of Terror. Now would not this Prospect alarm their Caution, and effectually put them upon their Guard? What Man in his Senses would not pause at this, would not seriously examine every Thing in a Matter that threatened such terrible Consequences? Which of you in such a Case would rush wantonly into Danger? And why will you suppose, that the Apostles would with less Reason expose themselves to whatever there is afflictive and terrible to human Nature? Could any Thing but full
and

and satisfactory Evidence convince them that the Cause they were to defend, which required them to abandon the Religion of their Country, and to oppose all the Religions in the World, and by so doing to make all the World their Enemies, which was accompanied with the known Loss of all that is dear in Life, and with the constant Peril of Death;---could any Thing embark them in an Attempt of this kind but the clearest, the plainest Evidence that the Cause they were defending was the Cause of God, and, when they had undergone all this Indignity and cruel Usage in the present World, that there was a certain and abundant Recompence awaiting them in that which is to come? This would surely keep their Attention awake, lead them to be suspicious of every Thing, and to make the exactest Scrutiny into the Resurrection of their Master, which was to be the grand Demonstration of his being the Messiah, and the deciding Proof of his heavenly Mission.

But with much less Suspicion of Imposture, than the Dread of Misery would inspire, the Circumstances of our Saviour's Appearance to them were of such a Nature, as made it impossible for them to be mistaken. They saw him plainly alive after his Passion. They saw him not once only, but often, not a few of them when separated from the rest, but all of them when *assembled* together, when each of them had severally an Opportunity of making his own Remarks, of noting and examining every Circumstance, of conversing together afterwards upon the Miracle, and comparing the Result of their several Observations. When he appeared, it was in broad Day-Light, and in the Sight of the Sun. He gave them Time to recollect themselves, to recover from the first Shock of an Event, that might hurry their Thoughts, and raise any Disorder of Mind. Besides, he not only submitted to be seen and heard, but even handled by them. *Reach hither*, said he to one of them, and all of them heard the Challenge,

Challenge, and beheld the Experiment, *reach hither thy Finger and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless but believing.* Now in a Matter thus plain, and obvious to Sense, in judging of which neither Acuteness of Genius, nor Sharpness of Wit, nor Depth of Learning were necessary, Nothing but a sound Understanding and a faithful Memory, Nothing but good Eyes and good Ears; after such fair Appeals to the Reason and Senses of the Apostles, after such free and full and repeated Examination as this, if the Apostles were themselves deceived, if they believed that they *heard with their Ears, and saw with their Eyes, and looked upon, and handled with their Hands of the Word of Life,* as Saint John expresses it, (1. John i. 1.) and were nevertheless mistaken; then there is surely Nothing but De-lusion in Life. We cannot know our Parents, we cannot know our Friends, or Children again, if the Apostles could be deceived in the Person of their blessed Lord and Master.---But

2---As to suppose the Apostles *deceived* is in the last degree ridiculous and absurd; so have we the strongest Reason to believe, that they were *honest* enough to *report faithfully* what they saw, and abhorred the very Thought of *deceiving others*. For Men to carry on an Imposture, that may terminate in their Advantage, is no more than may be expected from the Degeneracy and Corruption of human Nature. A Prospect of Wealth and Honour, or strong Appetites of Pleasure too frequently tempt Men into Designs, that cool Reason will not justify. But what was the Case of the Apostles? They had indeed not only no Inducement,---no Temptation to deceive;---but every Motive, every Interest, every Comfort, and every Hope of this Life and the next conspired to make them speak the Truth. Men are not wicked for Nothing. † Will any one in his right Wits set himself to propagate a Falshood, from which he can have no possible Advantage either

† Nemo gratis malus.

real or supposed, and which on the contrary in every View of it's probable Consequences must end in his Destruction? Now this the Apostles did, if you suppose that they intended to deceive the World into the Belief of a Falshood; this Cheat they carried on at the Expence of their Quiet, to the certain Ruin of their Fortunes, to the manifest Destruction of their Fame and Characters, and persisted in the Fraud even to Death. And is this credible---does it carry the least Shadow of a Likelihood with it? No: This is a Pitch of Folly of which human Nature is not capable. In the Case of the Apostles it is plain, as an able Writer observes, † that “Nothing but a conscious Sense of Truth, “with the Hope of a future Reward from “the God of Truth, could possibly support” them in preaching their Master's Resurrection “under the Loss of all Things, “and under the actual Suffering of all the “Evils of Life. *A good Man may give up “his Interest for the sake of Truth: A bad*

† Dr. Adams's Essay on Miracles, P. 26, 27.

“ Man

"Man will sacrifice Truth to Interest :---
 "But *no* Man will give up Interest and
 "Truth together for Nothing, or for the
 "fake of Falshood which is worse than
 "Nothing.---That Men should love Falf-
 "hood rather than Truth---that they
 "should chuse Labour and Sorrow, Pain"
 and Misery before "Pleasure, Ease, and
 "Esteem," is as contrary to Nature---as ut-
 terly impossible as for a Body to sink without
 Weight, or for a Stone to ascend against the
 Laws of Gravity.

To prevent the Belief of our Saviour's
 Resurrection it was asserted by the Watch,
 and countenanced by *the Chief Priests*, that
 the *Disciples of Jesus came by Night and stole*
him away, while the Guards were asleep. But
 what is there in this Account that wears the
 Face of Probability? Were Men ever ad-
 mitted before to bear Witness to what hap-
 pened while they slept? A Judge and Jury
 that should lay any Stress on such Testimo-
 ny as this would be deservedly thought to
 dream.

dream. If the Guards were asleep, how could they know that the Disciples had taken the Body away; and if they were awake, how came they to suffer it? And if the Apostles succeeded in this Attempt, what Purpose could they possibly serve by it? Was it to make others believe what they did not believe themselves? If they had *stolen* the Body of Jesus, then was *not Christ risen*; then was he a Deceiver, and they the Dupes of his Imposture: And in this Case was it not far more likely, as it was far more natural for them to load him with Curses, and to publish the Cheat to all the World, which would have recommended them to every honest Man's Esteem; whereas by preaching the Resurrection they had Nothing to expect but Imprisonments, Reproaches, Persecutions, and Death? Yet after this Robbery of the Sepulchre it is said, that the Apostles were really guilty of this Infatuation, foolishly stood it out to the whole Nation of the Jews, that their Master was actually risen, and sealed their Testimony with their Blood,

and, what is still more strange, engaged a large Number to embark in the same Design, to assert the same Delusion, and to support it with their Lives. Nay, they were mad enough to travel over the World for the Propagation of the same Imposture, and the World, at least the wisest and soberest Part of it, gave into the Delusion, and were likewise mad enough to believe them. All this must those maintain, who assert that Jesus did not really rise from the dead but that his Body was *stolen* by his Disciples. *Credat Judæus.* Let those Men believe it, who have lost all Sensations of Modesty, and shaken Hands with common Sense.

You see therefore, that the Faith of Christians in their Saviour's Resurrection is a rational Assent, built on the Basis of Truth, and supported on solid Evidence. Our Saviour for the Space of *forty Days* gave the Apostles the most undoubted Proofs of the Truth of his Resurrection. They saw him alive at different Times and in various

Man-

S E R M O N VI. 107

Manners, conversed familiarly with him, eat and drank in his Presence. Every rational Inducement concurred with the Evidence of their Senses to persuade them, that it was their Lord and Master, and that he was *risen indeed*. No Temptations of Interest, nor Allurements of Pleasure, interposed to bias their Belief, nor to make them weakly credulous of a doubtful unexamined Fact; but, on the contrary, all the natural Desires of Men, the Love of Reputation, the Love of Quiet, the Love of Life, the Aversion to Contempt and Persecution, and the Terrors of Death, were Motives that all united to make them severely inquisitive, and rigidly scrupulous in admitting the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection; they died in Confirmation of their Faith, and gave this indisputable Testimony of their Sincerity and deep Conviction of it's Truth. Have we not therefore abundant Reason to profess our Faith, as we do at this solemn Festival, in him that *was dead but is alive again*, was *crucified but is risen*, and *is now at the right*

Hand of God.---Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.

Such is our Christian Faith, *the Evidence of Things not seen*, but still most rationally believed.---As an Improvement of it, and a just Inference which every sensible Man must make from it, let it be considered as the greatest Consolation against the Fears of Death. The Gospel receives it's final Proof and Sanction from the Resurrection of our Saviour, and *Life and Immortality are brought to Light in the Gospel.* And Nothing affords more solid Comfort in a dying Hour, than *the Testimony of a good Conscience*, and the Consideration of our departing hence into a *better Country, that is an heavenly*, where our Happiness will be compleat and endless.---But then we must remember, that the Nature of this future State still depends on our Behaviour in the present, and will be happy or miserable, as our Lives here have been good or bad. The only Way therefore to support our Spirits in our last Moments, and to make

make our Death Bed easy, is to *be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord.*---Dying is, in truth, a solemn Business; a dreadful Scene to those who suffer the Terrors of a guilty Mind. Nor let any Man depend upon a Death Bed Repentance to calm the Rage of Conscience, or assuage it's Anguish and Remorse. For who can be certain, that a Death Bed Repentance is a sincere Repentance? And is not the Uncertainty of this a frightful Consideration---is it not terrible in that dark and gloomy Time, when a Man is *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, to be shivering with Doubt, and lost in perplexing Fears, ignorant of his eternal Fate, yet compelled to plunge for ever into a State that is wrapt up in impenetrable Clouds and Darknefs? But if a Man has made it his sincere Endeavour to please God,---if he has *the Testimony of his Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity he has had his Conversation in the World*, Christ has happily delivered him from all his Terrors by his atoning Death upon the Cross,

by

by his Resurrection from the dead, and his Intercession for him *at the right Hand of God*. How can he fear Death, who knows that Life detains him from the Place where he desires to be? How can this concluding Event distress him? A Storm it may be, but it is a Storm that will bring him to a joyful Harbour. When good Men are come to the Verge of Life, they can look back with Comfort. They can look forward, and, far from being dejected at the Prospect of the Grave, their *Souls do magnify the Lord, and their Spirits rejoice in God their Saviour*. And now, when their last Hour approaches, they have no further Concern in Life, than to take leave of their Friends, to bless their Children, to support and comfort themselves in the delightful Prospect of an immortal Life, and a glorious Resurrection *through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Who would not *die the Death of the Righteous*, and have their *latter End like his*? What Man in his Senses would not live the Life of the Righteous, that his *latter End*
may

may be *like his*,---that in the Agonies of Death, and the Jaws of the Grave, he may be able to possess his Soul in Serenity and Peace. To obtain this great Happiness deserves the best Care and Diligence of our Lives. And if we seriously and in earnest desire it, *we must make haste and delay not to keep God's Commandments.* We must instantly *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live sober and righteous and godly in the present World,* constantly prepared for Death, in order to die comfortably, and to *fall asleep in Jesus.* We must so live as to have all Things ready for our last great Journey. To forget it, to think lightly and superficially upon it, to neglect to prepare for it, is of the worst Consequence, and of the most extreme Danger to every valuable Hope and Interest of Man. An uncomfortable Death is then certain. The Hopes of the next Life are absolutely endangered. And besides, Life is so uncertain, that a wise Man should always be prepared for the worst. God only knows, when we shall be called to *give an Account of*
our

our *Stewardship*; and the Gospel tells us, that when *the Bridegroom cometh*, unless we are ready to enter with him to the Marriage, *the Door* will be shut against us. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day, nor the Hour, when the Son of Man cometh.

God give us the Grace to watch always, and to be constantly prepared, that, whenever he shall call us, we may depart in Peace, and be Partakers of his Salvation through the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N VII.

ROM. viii. 14.

*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they
are the Sons of God.*

CHRISTIANITY at it's first Appearance in the World was attested, and recommended to the Attention of Mankind by a Profusion of Miracles. Whatever can be conceived as a proper Display of *the Finger of God* accompanied it's infant State, and held it up to the Notice of Mankind. One of these amazing Evidences of the divine Concern for the Support and Propagation of the Religion of Jesus is the Subject of this Day's Commemoration; namely, the

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sudden

sudden miraculous Infusion of the Gift of Languages into a set of uneducated Persons, and enabling them to *preach the Gospel to every Creature*. But these *supernatural Interpositions*, and *the Gift of Miracles* continued no longer than the Reasons of them; till the several Nations had Natives of their own to preach the Gospel to them in their own Languages; till Christianity was sufficiently attested, and Jesus was shewn to be the Messiah, who was to die for *the Propitiation of our Sins*. But *the ordinary Influences of the Holy Ghost* still subsist in the Church, and shall accompany it to *the End of the World*. *As many as are the Sons of God* are still led by *the Spirit of God*; as I shall endeavour to explain and prove. But then it is necessary to consider with true Caution how this Matter stands, lest any of us should fondly delude ourselves into a groundless Presumption, such as must always both disgrace and injure true Religion, as if being *led by the Spirit of God* was more sensible and evident to us, than in the Nature of the Thing, and
consist-

consistently with our moral Powers, it really can be. This indeed we most certainly know, that in the Renewal of our Nature God's Spirit is the principal Agent; that *without him we can do nothing*; and that he is *the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who worketh in us both to will and to do*; (Phil. ii, 13.) that doth not however work upon us as a Mechanick works upon dead Materials, but as upon living and free Agents, that can and must co-operate with him,

In discoursing on the Text I shall

1---Enquire into the Effects, which this *leading of God's Spirit* produces.---And

2---Point out the Improvements, which we are concerned to make of this heavenly Assistance.

As to the *Manner* of the Holy Ghost's Operation on our Minds, it will not be expected, that we, who know so little of the

Nature of Spirits, should be able to explain this extraordinary Commerce of the first infinite Spirit with Man that holds, perhaps, the very lowest Rank in the Scale of intellectual Beings. The Effects of it nevertheless we very plainly discern. *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and you hear the Sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth : So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* We see, that the Man is changed, and become a *new Creature* : But the Knowledge of that Action, which produced this Change, is quite above our Comprehension.

It seems, I think, a Principle, which may be reasonably assumed, that the Assistance, which God's Spirit communicates to Man, is designed to restore and perfect his Nature, not to overwhelm and destroy it, Now if Grace be to restore our Nature, it must influence in the same way and manner, as our Reason governs us ; as were it essentially to destroy our Nature, then must Grace *necessitate*, and irresistibly determine our Behaviour

viour. And this would not only commit a perpetual Violence on the Frame of our Beings, and thereby reverse the Constitution of them, but also destroy the very Being of Virtue and Religion in Man, which is no longer Religion and Virtue, than while it is free and unconstrained.

Now what are the chief Wants of human Nature in the Business of Salvation? I mention not Man's fallen Condition. I suppose him sensible of this, sensible that he is a Sinner and has *come short of the Glory of God*, sensible that God sent his Son to call him to Repentance, sensible likewise that he must *repent or perish*, but unable in his own Strength to repent and turn himself to God, in himself *fickle and inconstant*, without just and solid *Notions* of Religion, and therefore likewise without just and warm *Affections* for it, more concerned to *make Provision for the Flesh* than to study the Holiness of Christianity, or to seek his Happiness in the narrow Path of God's Commandments.

Now

Now for the Recovery of this Wanderer is it not necessary in the first Place to arrest this *Inconstancy*, and fix this *Inattention*? If the first Want of unregenerate Man be the Want of Attention, the first Effect of Grace surely is to supply this Want. Without Attention it is impossible that the Means of Salvation should obtain their End. Religion in Man is upheld by Faith. Faith works by Hopes and Fears, by proposing the Joys of Heaven to our Wishes, and awing us with the Dread of *everlasting Burnings*. But neither the Joys of Heaven nor the Terrors of Punishment can influence to Godliness, unless in our Minds and Thoughts we duly attend to them. We see many Instances of Persons, who can trifle with Oaths, and play with the horridest Imprecations of Damnation. Many Persons of Sense enough in other Matters lead very unchristian Lives. If they do not *forsake the Assemblies* of public Worship, *as the Manner of some is*; yet the awful Truths of Religion

gion, which are there proposed and heard, work no Manner of Alteration in their Behaviour: Whilst others of inferior natural Abilities are penetrated and affected with the Promises and Threatnings of Religion, and persuaded to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. What can be the Reason of this unlikely Difference, when sensible Men live wickedly, and Men of very mean Capacity and Attainments in other respects shew a much better Judgment, and chuse that good Part, the Care of their greatest and most lasting Interests? Some, I fear, have been much staggered at this strange Appearance, and almost persuaded to believe Religion not the wisest Choice, and that they had *cleansed their Hearts in vain*. But shall I tell you a plain Truth? It is not always the greatest Genius that understands Religion best. Some Men of the most eminent Abilities, when their Minds are under the Power of loose and wicked Affections, are but poor Judges of Truth, though perhaps very ingenious Defenders of Error. How should

should they understand when they never impartially examined it? Habits of Sensuality and Riot have rendered them impenetrable to the Advices of Religion. The important Truths of it, like Arrows shot against an Anvil, rebound from their Minds without making any Impression. They have no Ear to hear, no Heart to understand; whilst others *in an honest and good Heart* attend to the Word, and therefore *bring forth Fruit with Patience*. This therefore seems to be the first Effect of Grace to *cause us to mind the Things that belong to our Peace*, and so to put us under the *leading* of the divine Spirit.

In this Manner it was that God, *in whose Hand are the Hearts of all Men*, directed the Attention of Lydia to the Truths which St. Paul explained before her, and the Proofs which he offered in support of them. The sacred Historian tells us: *The Lord opened her Heart*, as the Way to her Conversion, so that she attended unto the Things which were spoken of Paul. (Acts xvi. 14.)

From

From *considering and attending to Things* we get right Notions, and grow to be affected by them. Mere Knowledge indeed is good for nothing but to encrease the Guilt of Disobedience to it. But a Christian Knowledge, which flows from serious Thoughts, must ever with God's Blessing have an Influence on Life. *To know the only true God and Jesus Christ, the Scripture tells us, is Life eternal.* Not that a merely ideal Acquaintance with the God, whose fallen Creatures we are, or with the infinite Love of our Redeemer, who suffered in our stead, and has *washed us from our Sins in his Blood*, can in the least degree recommend the Man, who rebels against every Obligation, that so much Kindness imposes. But surely the serious Knowledge of these affecting Truths deeply impressed by cool Meditation, and the Grace of God upon the Heart, must in all reasonable Creatures lead powerfully to Obedience, and make them to think and say with the Apostle: *The Love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all*

dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (2. Cor. v. 14, 15.)

Such Sentiments and Dispositions of Heart the Apostle recommends to his Ephesians, and beseeches God's Spirit to produce in them. *For this Cause, says he, I bow my Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, that he would grant unto you according to the Riches of his Glory to be strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man; that Christ may dwell in your Hearts by Faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in Love may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height, and to know the Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the Fullness of God. (Ch. iii. 14--21.)*

And so entirely necessary are these Sentiments in Religion, this Affection and cordial Attachment

Attachment to our Duty, that Nothing can be done to any acceptable Purpose without it. Knowledge in Religion, let me repeat it once more, has no Value, unless it doth direct and influence our Lives. Faith, as a Virtue of Christianity, is not a Notion of the Brain, not an idle Speculation, or cold Assent, but a Persuasion that reaches the Heart a *Faith* that *worketh by Love*, an active zealous Principle, that is meant by *Regeneration*, and a *new Creature*, those Metaphors in Scripture that strongly express the thorough Change which Christianity produces, the *creating a clean Heart and renewing a right Spirit* within us. In this Manner are we *washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God* ;---and this is the Meaning of our being *sealed by the Spirit*, that is, our receiving his Image and Impression, which consists in *Righteousness and true Holiness*. And when our Wills are bent, and our hard Hearts melted, our wild Affections reduced, and the inborn Distemper of our Passions healed ; when every *Thought is brought into Captivity* to Christ, and every Desire is ruled by the Standard of the Gos-

pel ; when you have given up your Minds to the Guidance of Religion ; when you have such a Faith, as enables you to baffle all the Terrors and Temptations of the World, that commands all the Passions of the Soul, that *says to one, go and it goeth, and to another, come and it cometh*, habitually obedient to it's Orders ; a Faith that is the first Spring, and the continual Guide and Director of every Action, of every Word, and Thought ;--- these indeed are the full Effects of Grace on regenerate Man, and a proper Sense in which *the Spirit of God* may be said to *lead the Children of God*.---Let us now

2---Consider the Use which we are concerned to make of this divine Assistance.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. You have heard what this Spirit produces in those whom it possesses, how it roots out Corruption and implants in it's stead every Grace and Virtue of Christianity ; the Faith of which is not a vain Credulity in the Name of Jesus, but to do the Things which he has commanded, and
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to come to Christ by that Repentance which the Gospel teaches ; to seek your Reconciliation as a returning prodigal Son, truly repenting of your Sins past, sincerely sensible of your own Misery, and earnestly desiring to be cleansed from your Corruptions. And if you have these Evidences of your Christian Sincerity, surely you are *the Sons of God*. To be *led by the Spirit* is to produce the *Fruits of it in all Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth* : And if you bear this Mark and Impression of God's Spirit on your Lives, doubt not that you are *led by the Spirit of God*, and, if you persevere, that you shall have your Portion among the Children of God, who are the *Heirs of God, and Joint Heirs with Christ, whom the Father hath appointed Heir of all Things*.

The Apostle mentions indeed another Assurance of Christian Sincerity ; when God's *Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirit that we are the Children of God*. Some have fancied this to consist in sensible Attestations, in certain Feelings of God's Acceptance, and
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an immediate Consciousness of some supernatural Evidence of their heavenly Adoption. But this, I fear, is Nothing more than a Delusion. Some Constitutions are so fiery and combustible, and it is so easy in them to mistake a Flame of Thought, a Melting of the Brain, the Workings of an overheated Imagination for this *Witness* of God's Spirit, that this dangerous delusive Evidence cannot, I think, be the Testimony meant by the Apostle. The Text is capable of another very rational Construction. What is the Witness of our own Spirit, but that which the Apostle elsewhere calls *the Testimony of our Consciences*; and what is the Witness of God's Spirit, but the Witness of Scripture that is given by the Inspiration of God's Spirit? And if the Testimony of our own Consciences agree with the revealed Declarations of the Will of God, when honestly and impartially compared together, we may very truly say in a Sense full of Consolation and Assurance to those of whom this Testimony holds true ;---*the Spirit of God beareth Wit-*

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ness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.

But let every Man examine his own Heart, and impartially search into the true State of his Christian Character. You must be either *the Sons of God*, or the Children of that Apostate Being who is the Enemy of God. Judge yourselves, Brethren, whether those that live in the general Course of a wicked Behaviour, in Injustice, Inhumanity, Intemperance, and filthy Lusts; whether those who live in the Practice of any one known Sin, or in the habitual Neglect of any Part of their known Duty; consider and determine for yourselves, whether they that do such Things deserve to be called *the Children of God*, or can in any Propriety of Speech be said to be *led by the Spirit of God*. *In this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever doeth not Righteousness is not of God.*---And think not, I beseech you, that this is a trifling Enquiry; but let me assure you in the Name of God, that
your

your infinite Happiness depends on the fair Determination of this very important Point. *If you will judge yourselves*, if you will call your Lives to a strict Account, severely enquire into your Conduct, and compare it with the Law of your Duty, if you repent where you have done amiss and dealt wickedly, pray that God for Christ's Sake would forgive you all that is past, and humbly, earnestly, and constantly implore the Aids of his blessed Spirit in the Course of your Duty, there is no Doubt of your Forgiveness, and future Support in your Christian Obedience. It is true, Christian Religion hath done every Thing for us, that consistently with our Liberty and free Agency it can do. It inspires us with Attention to *the Things that belong to our Peace*, and supplies us with new Strength for the Performance of our Duty; but it is still in our Power to resist it's Influence, and divert our Thoughts upon other Things. But if we are so obstinately bent upon Vice as to pursue it at our dearest Peril, and reject the Warnings of God's Grace to
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the eternal Damage of our Souls, we shall have this Aggravation of our Guilt and Torment, that we *received the Grace of God in vain*, and that our Ruin and Destruction is entirely of ourselves : And how deplorable soever our Condition shall prove in the future State, our *Blood will be upon our own Heads*. God's Justice will triumph in our Ruin, and our own Consciences with all the World will be forced to pronounce him *holy in all his Ways, and righteous in all his Doings*.

Yet of you, my Brethren, I hope *better Things, and Things that accompany your Salvation* ; even *whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are honest, and of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise*, that you will study and practise these Things.---And I pray 'God, *who alone can order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men*, that he would grant unto us, that we may know and love the Thing which he has commanded. Give us, O God, the *Spirit to think and do*

always such Things as be rightful. Keep us, Lord, we beseech thee, with thy perpetual Mercy; and because the Frailty of Man without thee cannot but fall, we pray thee, that thy Grace may always prevent and follow us, keep us ever from all Things hurtful, and lead us to all Things profitable to our Salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R

S E R M O N VIII.

GEN. xxviii. 16.

Surely the Lord is in this Place!

AND is not God in every Place, present at all Times, and with all Persons? Is there *a Creature that is not manifest in his Sight?* Are not all Things naked and open to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do? Which Way soever you turn, are you not sure to meet with God? For can any Thing be void of him who *filletb all in all*? Undoubtedly the good Patriarch knew and believed all this, and wanted not to be told

what his Royal Descendant so sublimely expresses ; that God *searcheth us out and knows us, knows our down-sitting and up-rising, and understandeth our Thoughts afar off*; that he is *about our Bed, and about our Path, and acquainted with all our Ways*, that he *hath beset us behind and before, and the Darkneſs hideth not from God*. But what so awed the Patriarch's Spirits, so excited his holy Reverence and Wonder, the Verses preceding the Text will inform us. Forced into Exile by a Brother's unnatural Design upon his Life *he lighted on a certain Place, and tarried there all Night.-----And he dreamed a Dream, and behold a Ladder set, whose Top reached unto Heaven, and the Angels of God ascended and descended upon it*. And lest the Heir of the Blessing of Abraham expelled from his own Country, and from his Father's House, and wandering in a strange Land, should despond. or doubt the Performance of those Things which had been told him; *the Lord God of Abraham* appears, repeats and enlarges the promised Blessing, and assures him that

that none of his Words should fail. The rest is Jacob's Reflection upon the heavenly Vision: *Surely the Lord is in this Place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.*

The Solemnity of this Day will suggest to us suitable Meditations on these affecting Words.---Let me beseech your Attention to a few Observations on the Nature of the sacred Office performed on this Occasion: After which I shall enquire how fit and reasonable it is, that such Places should be consecrated to God, and separated from common Uses.

And would God, that every Man would adopt the Patriarch's devout Sentiments! Places consecrated to religious Worship are in the full Sense of Israel's strong Expression *none other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*, is likewise the God of Christians, infinitely present to hear the Prayers
of

of all that call upon him, but more peculiarly and graciously present in Places dedicated and set apart to his Worship and Service.

But will God indeed dwell in Temples made with Hands? Behold the Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him. Whither can you go from his Spirit, or whither can you go from his Presence? Whither can you retire, where his Hand shall not lead you, and his right Hand hold you? This indeed is great Matter of Comfort to weak imperfect Creatures, and a strong Reason why Men ought always to pray, and not to faint, since God is every where present, and his Being as near to us as we are to ourselves. But God's universal Presence is no more a Reason against the Erection and Dedication of Christian Churches, than it was against the Building of the Jewish Temple. Well did the wise King know, when he built an House to God, that his Essence was not to be circumscribed within material Structures. But though
 God's

God's Presence be infinite, yet Man, in all respects, is a very limited Being. His Actions are necessarily confined to Time and Place, and his religious Actions as necessarily subject to the same Limitations. And the Practice of the Church in all Ages, and the Opinion of all Nations concur to persuade us, that the Dedication of particular Places to the Worship of the Deity is agreeable to God, is consonant to common Sense, and suitable to the Nature of such a Being as Man.

It is indeed true, that *Consecration* does not change the Nature of Things. Persons, and Times, and Places devoted to God, according to the common Sentiments of Mankind, bear a special Relation to him, more peculiarly belong to the God of our Lives, and become sacred, not by any intrinsic Sanctity, but by a relative Sort of Holiness; as appertaining to that Being *who is glorious in Holiness*; as means of promoting the Honour and Reverence of his holy Name; as instrumen-

tal

tal to make the Comers thereunto perfect, and holy, as their Duty requires, in all Manner of Conversation. In these Respects, and for these Reasons are Churches holy, and no farther holy, than they serve these holy Purposes.

There is no Superstition in such a Practice as this, nor any Thing absurd in such a Dedication of our Churches to God;---Nothing but what clear Reason approves, and the constant Usage of all Christians in all Ages gives a Sanction to. From the earliest and purest Days of the Church we gather, that a Difference was ever made between sacred and common Places. What! *Have ye not Houses to eat and to drink in--or despise ye the Church of God--* is a Question of St. Paul, that evidently supposes this Distinction made, and censures the prophane Contempt of it. Of God's peculiar Regard to these Places, and of his more peculiar Presence in the *Assemblies of the Saints*, and in the solemn Places of divine Worship, we have strong Reason

Reason to be persuaded. And what Solomon so earnestly prayed for, that *what Supplication soever be made by any Man, or by all the People Israel, which shall know every Man the Plague of his own Heart, and shall spread forth his Hands towards this House, then bear thou in Heaven and forgive*;---what was but the wise Man's Prayer is made the Christian's Promise;---*where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of you.* Whenever the Congregation meets, *surely the Lord is in this Place. Verily, verily, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in the Name of Jesus, he will give it you.* It is true undoubtedly, that God dwells in the Hearts of all good Men, with them that are *of an humble and contrite Spirit*; and that he will be present to every devout Person that prays as he should do. But the Promise is yet more express to those that join their Prayers together;---stronger still to the united Petitions of a whole Congregation preferred to him in the Name of Jesus Christ, and in the Church of God. Hither if we repair in the Spirit of true De-

votion, with pure Hands and a clean Heart, and our Souls elevated towards Heaven; if *we confess and bewail our manifold Sins and Wickedness*, set before our Creator the Wants and Grievances we labour under, implore his Pardon for the one, and beseech his Goodness and Mercy to relieve us under the other;---God most certainly hears what we say, and will as certainly grant what we pray for, *if we ask any Thing according to his Will*, if our Prayer be, as we are taught, for *daily Bread*,---that the *Kingdom of God may come*, and his *Will be done* in our Souls. If we invoke *the Father of Mercies* to pardon our Sins, and *the God of all Consolation* to relieve our Distresses, well may we rest assured that *all Things*, sooner or later, *will work together for our Good*;---that *no good Thing*, Nothing that is really expedient for them, shall be denied to those that believe the Gospel, and *lead a godly Life*.

You see therefore, what is the Holiness of God's House, and what Promises are made

to

to those who *reverence his Sanctuary*, and *for-
sake not the assembling of themselves together*--

Let us, if it be necessary, enquire, how *fit*
and *reasonable* it is, that *such Places* should be
dedicated to the Worship of God.

That God's Name should be honoured in
the Earth is a Principle of self evident Rea-
sonableness. That Men should *remember*
their *Creator* is as manifestly right, as that
no Man should forget his Friend and Bene-
factor. If *a Son honoureth his Father*, and *a*
Servant his Master; (Malachi. i. 6.) if these
Expressions of Duty are ever the strongest
in the greatest and best Minds; and if God
be our *Father and Master*, if it is *he that bath*
made us, and *not we ourselves*; can we refuse
to pay these natural Honours, when they are
so justly and eminently due to him? But
Men may glorify God not only in their
Hearts and Affections, and by the Zeal and
Devotion of their Minds, but by visible and
external Actions, by lifting up their Hands,
by kneeling before him, and employing

their Tongues in *making his Praise to be glorious*. And how shall this be so effectually done, as *when we assemble and meet together to render Thanks for the great Benefits we have received at his Hands?* We all think, and very justly, that a Gratitude is due for Kindnesses received, that Duty requires us to serve those whose obliged Beneficiaries we are. Now to serve God, in the Sense wherein Men are said to serve one another, is indeed impossible. *A Man cannot be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself.* (Job. xxii. 2.) To serve him therefore must be rather to *set forth his most worthy Praise*, to publish to others the Sense we have of his adorable Perfections. And in the public Assemblies of Christians can we best perform this. There will our *Light shine before Men* with the most engaging Lustre. To see a numerous, yet regular Congregation met together in a Place set apart for sacred Purposes, uniformly breathing forth their joint Prayers and Praises to *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*;---what more striking

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striking Scene can be imagined to make Vanity itself thoughtful, to persuade even Prophaneſs to become devout,---to *go and do likewise*, and *glorify our common Father which is in Heaven?*

“Towards the keeping Mankind in Order,” as † one observes who had certainly a great Inſight into human Nature, “it is neceſſary there ſhould be ſome Religion profeſt and even eſtabliſhed, which cannot be without ſome public Worſhip. And were it not for that Senſe of Virtue which is principally preſerved, ſo far as it is preſerved, by national Forms and Habits of Religion, Men would ſoon run wild, prey upon one another, and do what elſe the worſt of Savages do.”

Conſider one Reaſon more for the Conſecration of proper Places to God's Service taken from the Make and Frame of our Nature. We all know and feel our own Frailties, how much the Principle of Intelligence within us ſuffers from the Influence and Ty-

† Wollaston. Relig. Nat. delin. P. 124.

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ranny of our Senses. *The corruptible Body presseth down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind that museth on many Things.* (Wisd. ix. 15.) Such is the Form and Constitution of our Spirits, that it is difficult to keep the same Thought, much more difficult to keep the same religious Thought still present to the Mind, “to settle and fix what is in it’s own Nature” so wandering and volatile.” Diffipation steals upon us insensibly, and worldly Thoughts in the midst of our Devotion too often interpose between God and our Souls, cool the Ardour of our Prayers, deaden the Vigour of heavenly Sentiments, and quench the warm Gratitude of our Hearts. Can we therefore too cautiously guard against this unhappy Weakness of our Nature, by withdrawing from the Places of common Business and common Life, where this World and it’s Cares so habitually solicit and subdue our Senses, by repairing to God’s Building, the Place where *the Lord is*, where *the solemn Meeting*, where every Object of religious

religious Veneration tends to collect our Thoughts, to fence against the Intrusion of earthly Cares, to inspire Life and Warmth into our Devotions, and excite us to worship God, as we are commanded to *love him, with all our Hearts and all our Souls?*

This indeed is our bounden Duty, whenever we resort to the House of God. For if the Mind be absent,---if the Heart does not join in the Service of the Lips,---in vain do we come to Church, if we come but to offer *the Sacrifice of Fools*. And it is hard to say which is most absurd and sinful,---for Men to worship dead Images the Work of their own Hands, or to treat the living God with a Service fit for nothing but dead Images, with Words and Sounds to which their Hearts are Strangers.

To ask of God those Blessings and Mercies which we want is a just and reasonable Duty, founded both in the Nature of God, and in the Nature of Man; in the Nature
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of God, as he is *the Author of every good and perfect Gift*, and the Fountain of all Happiness; and in the Nature of Man, who is a very weak and very imperfect Creature, compassed with Wants, which he cannot supply, liable to many Calamities, and exposed to many Dangers, which he cannot sufficiently provide against. You do not understand, perhaps, the Philosophy of Prayer. But this every Man, that will consult his Bible, may very plainly understand; that Prayer is the instituted Means of obtaining the Blessings and Mercies of Heaven;---that we must *ask*, if we will *receive*: And we are assured that every one that asketh doth receive; that, if Men being *evil know how to give good Gifts unto their Children, much more shall our Father which is in Heaven give good Things to them that ask him*. With such a Promise from him who gave us our Lives, and will give to our Prayers every Thing that belongeth to *Life and Godliness*,---why should Men be slow to ask, or averse to seek when they may so assuredly find, so certainly receive,

receive, if not the very Blessing which they ask, yet something which they really most want, and will be most for their Advantage to obtain. Those, who have been so very commendably zealous to build up the House of God, that have joined both their Hearts and their Hands in this Labour of Piety, will shew, I trust, a Zeal as ardent in frequenting *the Courts of the Lord's House*, will be as seriously devout and earnest, as Men persuaded that *the Lord, is in this Place*, will be as humbly importunate for Pardon and Grace to help, as those who know themselves to be sinful Creatures, unable to escape, if God should *be extreme to mark what they have done amiss*, and who feel themselves without his Mercy and Forgiveness liable to be wretched and miserable. *And suffer, I beseech you, the Word of Exhortation.* It is not a mere Separation from common Uses, in which the Holiness of this Place consists. It is a Means, and of no further Value in the Sight of God, than as a Means of making us *holy in all manner of Conversation.* We

cannot indeed raise a Structure to the Supreme Being, whose Magnificence shall be suitable to the Majesty of the great Inhabitant. But there is yet a Way of enriching it above all the Treasures of Wealth, and adorning it beyond all the Embellishments of Art, with the Ornament of sincere Devotion, with the Graces and Virtues of a Christian Spirit. And, if the Ministers of Religion are vehement and importunate with Men to *perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*; if they are obliged to deal impartially with all, to flatter no Man, to admonish, and (with Prudence) to reprove the greatest;---*forgive them this Wrong*: It is, because *Holiness becometh the House of God*: It is, because *without Holiness no Man shall ever see the Lord*.

Let your Conversation therefore be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ. And may God remember you for the good Deeds that you have done for the House of your God, and for the Offices thereof! May the Mercies of Heaven be upon you!---And wheresoever we are, may

Grace

S E R M O N VIII. 147

Grace still enable us all to *set God always before us*, and in every Part of our Lives so to conduct ourselves as *beholding him who is invisible*; (Heb. ii. 27.) never to miss the stated Hours of the Church, and ever to worship God with an *holy Worship*, with a deep Seriousness of Attention and the devoutest Affection of our Minds; not only to *worship him in Spirit and in Truth*, constantly, fervently, but to *be Followers of God as dear Children*, *purifying ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*; that after doing his Will upon Earth we may be accepted at last, and *enter into our Master's Joy* through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Redeemer, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the one ever blessed God, *be ascribed all Dominion, Obedience, and Praise, in all Churches of the Saints, both now and for evermore.*

S E R M O N VIII

Grace will grant us all to the God who is
for us, and the every part of our life is
to conduct ourselves as becometh him who is
in us; (Heb. ii. 27) never to miss the
hallowed Hours of the Church, and ever to
worship God with an holy Will, with a
deep Sentiment of Atonement and the
perfect Affection of our Mind: not only to
be a part of his Church, and in his constant
presence, but to be followers of God in
all his ways, and to be like him in all his
attributes, that answering his Will
upon Earth we may be accepted as his
in the Father's Joy through the Holy
Spirit and Mediation of our blessed Redeemer
to whom with the Father and the Holy
Ghost, the one ever blessed God, be ascribed
all Dominion, Obedience, and Glory, now
and forever, Amen.

S E R M O N IX.

LUKE xiii. 5.

*I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall
all likewise perish.*

THE Belief of a Deity, and that God
does inspect the Lives of Men, and
the Manners of Nations, that he often in-
flicts present and temporal Judgments on the
wicked, is undoubtedly a reasonable Senti-
ment, necessary to support Religion in the
World, and to keep up a publick and na-
tional Dependance on Providence. But
then it is a very weak and unjustifiable Use
that

that is often made of this Belief, to infer the Guilt or Innocence of particular Persons from their external Circumstances in Life; to conclude from this Man's being greatly miserable, that therefore he is greatly wicked; or because another *prosper*s in the World and has *Riches in possession*, that he is consequently a Favourite of Heaven. Our Saviour to prevent uncharitable Conclusions from the visible Distresses of Men directs us in such Cases to turn our Thoughts rather upon ourselves. *There were present at that Season, says the Evangelist, some that told him of the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them---suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Our Saviour might justly thus exhortate
with

with the Jews, whose national Wickedness deserved the severest Censure.---And would God the present Character of the English Nation did not furnish Cause for these, or some such melancholy Reflections as these ! Think you of those Countries where the War rages, where the Fields are made a Desert, where the miserable Inhabitants are mangled and butchered, or, if they escape the Sword, are yet plundered of their Fortunes, and from Plenty reduced to beg their Bread, *nay to seek it out in desolate Places ;---think you, that their Wickedness is greater than that of others, greater than our own, or more deserving God's Vengeance ? I tell you nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

As an Improvement of these Words, and with a view to the present solemn Occasion, which calls for our sincerest Humiliation and Repentance, to deprecate and avert the Judgments of Heaven, and to implore the Continuance of God's Blessing upon us and our Children, I shall shew you

1.---How

1.---How exactly they were accomplished upon the Jews, who refused to repent, and therefore perished : And then

2.---I shall apply them to ourselves as an Argument to persuade us to Repentance.

One End of Providence in permitting and recording this Cruelty of Pilate on the Galileans, and the *Fall of the Tower in Siloam upon eighteen* of the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, was to warn the Jews of their Guilt by an Example of the Judgments, which God will certainly inflict on all that persevere in their Wickedness. Of this we have Proof beyond Exception, the Testimony of Experience. This Sentence of our blessed Lord pronounced on that unhappy People, *except ye repent*, was literally fulfilled. The Jewish Nation perished, as those miserable *Galileans*, whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices, and as *those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell*.

Read

Read but that affecting Description in the War with Titus, which the Jewish † Historian gives of his seditious Countrymen, who had possessed themselves of the Temple. "Their Weapons flew thick about the Altar, and slew the Priests with those that offered Sacrifice. Strangers that came thither out of Devotion perished also by the same Hands, and the Parts about the Altar streamed with Blood." Upon which Josephus exclaims,—"O miserable City, that art destroyed by intestine Broils, and hast thy Temple strewed with slaughtered Carcasses!"

Read over the History of the last Siege of Jerusalem so memorable for the worst Calamities that ever befel a wicked Nation, when innumerable Jews from all Parts of the World were assembled thither to keep the Passover. Then was the Blood of more than a Million of Persons mingled with their

† Ant. L. 6. C. 1.

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Sacrifices:

Sacrifices : Then were the Walls of Jerusalem battered down by the Roman Ram upon the Inhabitants, and buried them in the Ruins, literally verifying our blessed Saviour's Words, *suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans? Or those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, think you, that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*

Now all these Things happened to them for Examples, and they are written for our Admonition upon whom the Ends of the World are come. From like Circumstances like Consequences may reasonably be feared. And in the late and present Manifestations of God's Judgments in the Earth, in which the Hand of Providence is evident almost to Eye-Sight, God has doubtless the same merciful Views, and intends in the same Manner to warn us to *flee from the Wrath to come.* And should we be disobedient to the heavenly Warning, should we persist impenitently in our Sins, and refuse to hearken, will not God certainly

certainly *visit for these Things*? What are the Jews but awful Monitors to teach us Wisdom by their dreadful Sufferings,---that assuredly *there is a God that judgeth the Earth*? May the Punishments they underwent instruct us to obey, when God calls upon us to repent and amend our Lives!

This was the Application I proposed to make of the Text, namely, as an Argument to persuade us to Repentance.

There is indeed so striking a Resemblance between ourselves and that People, to whom the Words of our Lord in the Text were spoken, that we cannot calmly consider it without being seriously affected by it.---
 1. The Jews were called upon to repent by very recent and speaking Instances of the divine Justice: And so are we.---2. The Jews had till that Time been mercifully spared: And God has hitherto in a great Degree graciously spared us.---3. The Jews were no less guilty than those upon whom the Judg-

ments of God fell: And there is, I fear, too much Ground likewise to believe, that our own Guilt as a People is not inferior to the Guilt of those, whose Iniquities God is now severely visiting upon them.---4. The Jews despised the warning Voice of Jesus, and perished as the Galileans did. What shall we do therefore? Must we not expect the same Fate, if we shew the same Impenitency?

1.---As the Jews in our Saviour's Days, so we in our's have seen Examples of God's Judgments summoning us to Repentance.--- And here if past Judgments like past Mercies were not too generally soon forgotten, and Men's Fears as well as their Gratitude were not too commonly superficial and short lived, I could recal to your Thoughts a Series of Visitations that evidently shew the Hand of God upon us;--the long and grievous Murrain among one Species of Cattle destined for the use of Men;---the Years of Scarcity when many suffered great Distress, and wanted that *Food* which is *convenient* for them

them ;---Earthquakes so amazing and extensive in their Spread, so fatal in their Consequences, *shaking terribly the Earth* with incredible Havock and Desolation.---You can easily recollect these awful Events, past indeed and gone, but past at no great Distance. And lest these should have lost their Power to impress us, there is still a *Judgment* of God abroad *in the Earth*, one of the severest and the most afflictive to a benevolent Mind, full of Calamity and Terror, the Carnage and Miseries of War. And if *Nation rising against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom* ; if the powerful Combination of the Enemies of the Protestant Name resolute even in their Defeats, who when we labour for *Peace make themselves ready for the Battle* ;--if these are Events clearly pointing out to us *the Finger of God* ; if these Things can alarm our Fears, or awaken us to *remember our Creator* ;--these are the awful Voice of Heaven that call upon the *wicked to forsake his Way, to cease to do Evil and learn to do well* ; these are the solemn Warnings, *that except*

we

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we

we repent we shall likewise perish. Thus our first Resemblance of the Jews is strong, and we as well as they are urged to Repentance by plain Instances of an interposing Providence, and that *God is arisen to judge the Earth.* And

2.---As the Jews in our Saviour's Days, so have we hitherto been mercifully spared. Though our Beginnings were unprosperous, we have experienced nevertheless a gracious Providence in the Progress of the War. God grant our latter End may still go on to encrease! But it surely concerns us greatly to consider, how far we have answered to the Blessings of God upon us, and whether as a truly religious People we may reasonably hope, that God will go on to *prosper the Work of our Hands upon us.* You can well remember, how lately this Nation suffered under a scarcity of Bread, when God cut us short, and opened to us the Years of Famine. We are now enjoying the Streams of Plenty. God, who *maketh a fruitful Land barren*

barren for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein, hath in Mercy caused our Land to yield us her Fruits of Increase. And has this filled our Hearts with Thankfulness, taught us to think upon God, and enjoy his Blessings in Sobriety and Temperance? Or rather is it not notorious that these Mercies have been sadly abused, are still daily abused, in every Way of Vice and Riot? You can remember how unfortunate we were in the Entrance of this bloody War, which has so long, and so severely raged to the Destruction of the human Species. You can recollect our desponding Situation, when Men's Hearts failed them for Fear, and for looking after those Things which were coming upon us. (LUKE. xxi. 26.) And now when God hath changed the Fortunes of this Nation, and blessed us with Success beyond our most sanguine Hopes, and in some very important Instances above the Probabilities of second Causes; when he hath turned again the Captivity of our Sion, so that we are like unto them that dream; when the Lord hath done
great

great Things for us, so that our Mouth is filled with Laughter and our Tongue with Joy ; have we seriously paused on these awful Blessings, on these alarming Mercies ? Have we calmly considered them as Calls upon our Gratitude, and have we rendered again according to the Benefits done unto us, knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth us to Repentance ? And should we still perversely refuse to hearken to the gracious Summons, should we turn a deaf Ear to the Voice of God, speaking both in his Mercies and in his Judgments ; what can we reasonably expect from a Conduct so wickedly ungrateful ? Be convinced, I beseech you, of the instant Necessity of amending our Lives, and turning to the Lord our God with all our Hearts, lest if we delay to do it, we should soon be convinced in a Manner that I am sure I do not wish, and more fully than you can desire, that Misery and Destruction are in the Ways of impenitent Sinners.---May God, who hath so often delivered us, and we trust will yet deliver us from the Hands of those Enemies,

whom

whom no Treaties can bind, and whose *tender Mercies are Cruelty*;--may that great God still watch over us for Good! But let us likewise do our Part, and by the Reformation of our Hearts and Lives earnestly recommend ourselves to the Protection of Heaven. *O Lord, Righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us Confusion of Faces, as at this Day.* (Dan. ix. 7.) *O Lord, enter not into Judgment with thy Servants, O Lord, spare thy People. It is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not.*

3.---As the Jews in the Days of our Saviour deserved the Fate of the Galileans, *whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices*,---is not our Guilt likewise,---(God be merciful to us!)---but alas! is not the Guilt of this Nation equal to the Guilt of those who have suffered, and still suffer so severely under the afflicting Hand of Providence? But we shall imagine perhaps, that bad as it must be owned we are, we are not surely

worse, nay possibly we are much better than our Enemies. We have not the Blood of murdered Martyrs to answer for : We have not corrupted the Faith of Christ, and given in it's stead a System of monstrous Doctrines supported by the Fury of Persecution : We are not surely so bad as they.---But had we as much Patience to hear the Comparison, as there is Reason to make it, it were easy to ask, which in your own Opinion is most criminal ; he that opposes a Religion which he believes to be false, or one that is unconcerned for the Honour of a Religion which he is convinced to be true ;---one that is ready to make any Sacrifice to his Religion, or another that sacrifices his Religion to his Lusts ? Which is the worst ; a Papist that is over-zealous for his own corrupt System, or a Protestant that gives himself no Thought about the purest and best Religion in the World ; *that knows God, and yet glorifies him not as God, but holds the Truth in Unrighteousness,* is careful only about *what he may eat, and what he may drink, and where-*

II. *withal*

withal he may be cloathed, the Pleasures and Splendours of Life, but for the Support of Piety, the Propagation of virtuous Principles, to promote a Seriousness in religious Concerns, is here quite unsollicitous and insensible, and far from engaging others to a Fear of God, and a Faith in Jesus Christ by his own good Example, shews by his Manner of Life that *he has no Fear of God before his Eyes?*

4.---In the midst of this Forgetfulness of God our merciful and blessed Saviour still admonishes us as he formerly did the Jews, visits us with Judgments, *sets Life and Death before us, the Blessing and the Curse,* and affectionately calls upon us to be instructed, *lest his Soul depart from us.* So far then our Case and that of the Jews hold but too much Resemblance. What remains therefore but to apply to ourselves, what our blessed Lord applied to the Jews?---*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Alas ! What Heart can forbear to ache,
---what Eye can restrain it's Tears at such a
Prospect as this ? Have you never read,
have you never thought of such a Day of
Visitation ? You have read of the strange
Cruelties of savage Indians. For a Mo-
ment pass in your Reflections to America,
and recal to your Thoughts what our Brethren
have suffered there.----Honest, industrious
Families roused from their Sleep at Midnight
only to be robbed and butchered, the dying
Groans of Brothers, Fathers, Husbands,
weltering in their Blood, the Cries of inno-
cent, helpless Children weeping over their
murdered Parents, deprived in a Moment of
all that was dear to them, of all that could
yield them Consolation and Support, and
suffering whatever unrelenting Villainy can
fancy or commit ; alas ! what a Scene is this
only to *think* of, but what a Scene to *suffer*
in ! What if this Kingdom in the Wrath of
Heaven should become a Theatre for acting
the same Tragedies ? What if God should

pour

pour in a Flood of Enemies ;---if on a Day of public Worship like this, met as we are together, a Band of merciless Ruffians armed with Barbarity and Rage should enter, and *minge our Blood* with our Devotions ? What if the Foundations of this House should begin to tremble, and the Walls to tumble on our Heads, as *those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell* ? What if God should multiply his Judgments upon us, and *make our Plagues wonderful* ? *The Lord shall make the Pestilence cleave unto thee until he have consumed thee from off the Land: (Deut. xxviii. 21.) And because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with Joyfulness and with Gladness of Heart for the Abundance of all Things, therefore shalt thou serve thine Enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in Hunger and in Thirst, and in Nakedness, and in Want of all Things, and he shall put a Yoke of Iron upon thy Neck, until he have destroyed thee. (v. 47, 48.)*

Undoubtedly God can, if he pleases, reverse the Liberties and Independency of
this

this Nation, and change our Successes into Mourning ; for his Power is without Bounds or Shore. God has often punished wicked Nations by a Series of Providences as visible almost as the Vices which occasioned them. Witness the Jews, and the various Revolutions in the Fate of that People from their first Erection into a Nation down to their final Destruction. And the Word of Jesus denounces, that like Cases will have like Consequences; and that, except a wicked Nation repent, *it shall likewise perish*. What our present Character as a Nation is ; how much Indifference to Religion, and Contempt of Principle prevails among the higher Ranks of Life, and how much Debauchery and Riot in the inferior and common Sort ; how cold a Regard to God and Virtue obtains universally ;---all this our Enemies will tell with Pleasure. And will not God *visit for these Things*,---visit as certainly as he loves the Thing that is right,---as certainly as he will by no Means acquit the guilty ? There is one Way to prevent
the

the Triumphs of them that hate us. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, what is both for our public and private Welfare. Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him. At what Instant, says the Lord, I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy, if that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* (Jer. xviii. 7, 8.)

I may perhaps need an Apology for detaining you so long; but the Occasion is the most awful and affecting that can be. Our Trade, our most valuable Interests, as a commercial People, our civil and religious Rights to a great Degree, are staked on the Event of a War, of which no Man can see what will be the Conclusion.---Our Strength compared with that of the Enemies combined

bined against us may teach us to adopt
 the Psalmist's Words : *If the Lord himself
 had not been on our Side, now may Israel say,
 if the Lord himself had not been on our Side
 when Men rose up against us, they had swallow-
 ed us up quick when they were so wrathfully
 displeased at us.* God has blessed us in this
 Struggle for our invaded Rights much be-
 yond both our Deserts and Hopes. And we
 are assembled this Day to implore the Con-
 tinuance of his Blessings, to fast, to pray, to
 humble ourselves in order to turn away the
 Wrath of Heaven from us, and from our
 Children.---But if we fast with the greatest
 Severity ;---if we pray with the intensest De-
 votion ;---if we humble ourselves in the
 Dust ;---can this at all avail, if we carry
 home with us our former Vices, if we still
bate to be reformed, are devoted to the same
 Lusts, are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Le-
 vers of God* ? No ; *let the wicked forsake his
 Way.* A deep, a full Humiliation of our-
 selves alone can engage the Providence of
 God to go forth with our Fleets and Ar-
 mies.

mies. But what will you call such an Humiliation? *Is it such a Fast as I have chosen, a Day for a Man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his Head as a Bulrush, and to spread Sackcloth and Ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast, and an acceptable Day to the Lord? Is not this the Fast which I have chosen, to loose the Bands of Wickedness, to break off thy Sins by Righteousness, to deal thy Bread to the hungry, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own Flesh? If thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul; then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer thee; then shall thy Light rise in Obscurity, and thy Darkness, though all were dark and black about thee, shall brighten up, and be as the Noon Day. (Isa. lviii.) If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the Good of the Land. But if ye still rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword. (Isa. i. 19, 20.) If ye still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your King. (1. Sam. xii. 25.)*

Let us therefore in this our Day---for the
 the Prosperity of our Country,---for the
 Preservation of our Souls,---and *that our
 Spirits may be saved in the Day of the Lord
 Jesus*, (1. Cor. v. 5.)- -for every Considera-
 tion of public and private, of present and
 future Happiness,---O let us *mind the Things
 that belong to our Peace! To-Day, whilst it is
 called to-Day*, let us repent, lest we *perish*;---
perish in every view, and in every Sense,
 as Englishmen, and as Christians, tempo-
 rally, and everlastingly. Let us learn, what
the Grace of God came to teach us, to *deny
 Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live so-
 ber, and righteous, and godly in the World,*
 always *keeping Innocency, and taking Heed un-
 to the Thing that is right*, because *that*, and
 that only in conjunction with the Merits of
 Jesus Christ, will secure to us the Protection
 of Heaven, will keep us safe at present,
 and *bring us Peace at the last*.

Now to him who hath so often and so
 wonderfully delivered us from the Hands
 of

S E R M O N IX. 171

of our Enemies, and if we sincerely repent will still deliver us, that God who will not forsake us unless we forsake him,---to him be given all Praise and Obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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S E R M O N X.

LUKE xvi. 9.

I say unto you, make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.

THE Motive of all others, which most effectually enforces a right Behaviour, is drawn from the Belief and Expectation of a future State. This must ever awe the reasonable Mind, and terrify the evil Conscience, must make the Sinner sit joyless over the Gains of Guilt, and compel him to do *justice*

tice and love Mercy, if for no better Reason, yet from mere Selfishness at least, and a Regard to the Quiet of his own Bosom. Death, we see in fact, is a Law to which all are subject; and after Death the Judgment,---a solemn and severe Enquiry into the Manners of all Men, and a just, impartial Distribution of Reward and Punishment according to the Things done in the Body. A wise Provision for this Determination of our everlasting State is therefore the great Business before us; and the Advice of our blessed Saviour in the Text the most reasonable and important that can be, to bend our Attention chiefly to the future Fates and Fortunes of the human Race, to make the Advantages of this Life contribute, so far as they may, to the Happiness of a better, and so to pass through Things temporal, that we finally lose not the Things eternal. I say unto you, make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.

Let

Let us consider

1.--What is meant by *the Mammon of Unrighteousness*.

2.---What is that Employment of it, which will *make* us the best and most lasting *Friends*.

By *making to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness* cannot be intended, what indeed the Words at the first Glance seem to suggest, an Art of atoning for unwarrantable Ways of gaining Riches by a Dedication of any Part thereof to the Purposes of Charity. No Liberality of that which is another's deserves the least Degree of Praise; and the Observation of the Heathen Moralist is indisputably just, that †
 “whoever does Wrong to one in order to
 “assist another is guilty of the same Disho-

† Qui aliis nocent, ut in alios liberales sint, in eâdem sunt Injustitia, ut si ipsi in suam rem aliena convertant.--Nihil enim liberale, quod non idem sit justum. Cic. De Off. L. 1.

“nefty, as if he had taken what is another’s merely to ferve himfelf. For nothing that is unjuft can be an Act of Liberality.” What is here translated the *Mammon of Unrighteoufnefs* means not therefore the Riches that are unrighteoufly obtained, but the Wealth that is *unjuft* to it’s Poffeffors, what ill requites the Pains that they have taken to obtain it. It denotes *uncertain Riches*, (1. Tim. vi. 17.) *deceitful Wealth*, what is *false* to it’s Promifes, and raifes Expectations which it feldom or never *juftifies*. Accordingly (in verfe 11th.) we fee that the *unrighteous Mammon* is opposed to the *true Riches*, thofe good Things which verify their Name, Bleffings that are true and permanent, full as our Wifhes and lafting as ourfelves; in a Senfe conformable to which Pheraulas in Xenophon terms his Patrimony, a poor one indeed, but † *very juft* to it’s Owner, in faithfully rendering him back the Seed entrusted to it’s Bosom.

† δικαιοτατον

Now

Now without railing at Wealth, or undervaluing it's real Use and Consequence, we may nevertheless with great Truth affirm, that Riches are *deceitful*, and answer not up to the Opinion that is conceived of them. Call them, if you please, the good Things of this World;--you cannot however but see to what a Variety of Accidents and Abatements these good Things are exposed; that they are uncertain in the Possession and unsatisfying in the Use of them; that Plenty is not always Enjoyment; that the greatest Affluence of Wealth is a Blessing or a Curse according as you shall use it; if unenjoyed, it is a Burden, and not a Pleasure; and if enjoyed in the Ways of Vice and Riot, it becomes a double Load of Guilt and Diseases. But though Riches were stable and permanent, sure to produce Good without any Mixture of Bitterness, and capable of filling up the Fulness of our Desires;---yet still, there is a God that ought to be feared, whose Stewards the wealthy are. And if they are unfaithful

Stewards, and false to their Trust; if they consume upon their own Pleasures, what their great Master intended, not merely for themselves, but moreover for the Relief and Comfort of the poor and miserable; if they waste their Master's Goods in a Life of Inhumanity and Riot; if the Poor, that should receive from them their Portion, in vain solicit to melt the frozen Hand of Charity; what must be their Anguish and Confusion of Mind, when God shall say, *give an Account of thy Stewardship?* When you *fail*, as you inevitably must when you are removed from your Riches, as you soon will be, and depart hence to give an Account of them;---what will you do, if you have *made to yourselves* no *Friends* with this short-lived, transitory Wealth, that, when you die, you may be *received into everlasting Habitations*. It surely deserves our serious Attention to consider

2.---What is that Employment of our Fortunes, which will *make to us* the best and most durable *Friends*.

Now

Now this certainly is to behave as good Stewards of the Grace of God, and as every Man hath received the Gift, even so to minister the same one to another (1. Pet. iv. 10.) with Faithfulness as entrusted by the great God of our Lives, and with Diligence as the Time of our Stewardship is short, and because *slotful* Servants at the Day of Judgment will certainly have their Portion with *wicked* ones. Every Way of doing Good to the Souls and Bodies of Men, every Opportunity of relieving the Wants, of instructing the Ignorance of our poor Brethren, it greatly imports us to seize and improve to the utmost; convinced that *he, who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly*; (2. Cor. ix. 6.) and living always under the awful Persuasion, that in the Day of Judgment you can have no sure and solid Hope, unless you have done Good, unless you are *rich in good Works*, and have cheerfully imparted according to your several Abilities to the Wants of all that stand in need of your Assistance.

There is indeed no one Duty in Scripture so often repeated, so earnestly pressed upon us, as that of Charity. And amidst the Variety of Cases that call upon our Benevolence, though some may more *importunately* demand, yet none can more *reasonably* ask it, than the Charity that is employed in the Care of poor Children. These unhappy Creatures indecently and miserably destitute of Cloaths, wanting the *Food* that is *convenient* for them, wanting the Supports of Education that are equally necessary to the Nurture of their immortal Part, untutored to Virtue, and ready to receive the fatal Impression of those Vices and Crimes, that disgrace human Nature, disturb the Peace of Society, and are punished at last with the endless Torments of God's Wrath ;---these are the humble Solicitors of your Compassion. There needs no laboured Discourse to prove the Necessity and Usefulness of such Charities. Common Sense acknowledges, that these Children greatly want your
Care ;

Care; and common Experience shews the bad Consequences of withholding it. What Vices, what Crimes, what private Immoralities, what public Disturbances, what Impiety and Profaneness are the natural Growth of uneducated Poverty is plain and evident to Eye-sight. A Well-wisher to the Peace and Comfort of his own Neighbourhood cannot think himself uninterested in the Prevention of such Disorders and Scandals. And will any one that calls himself a Christian stand an unconcerned Spectator, and refuse his charitable Assistance,---urged as he is by the joint Demands both of Compassion and Piety? What indeed can you do with that Ability which God has given you, and for the Use of which you must account to him, what can you do more acceptable to God, than to exert yourself in this necessary Charity;---or more useful to the World, than by a religious Education to secure the Virtue of those, who will otherwise, it is more than probable, grow up to be Nuisances and Pests to the Public, and fatal perhaps both to you and

and to themselves? Nay, what can you do more wisely for your own Interests, than to part with a present Sum for the sake of a most valuable Reversion, to *lay up for yourselves*, not the perishable Wealth of this World, that may from a Variety of Accidents slip away from your Hands, but *Bags that wax not old*, an imperishable *Treasure in the Heavens*?

It has been asserted indeed by one that was no Friend to such Charities, that this Management of poor Children will neither render them more useful Members of Society, nor make them more virtuous and religious: And he insultingly asks † “How many are hanged at Tyburn that can write and read, or rather how few that cannot?” But is any Man after all so lost to Reason, as to imagine, there is really Nothing in a sober and religious Education? Grant that it sometimes fails of it's Effect, and produces no Habits of Virtue, Is it

† Cato's Letter on Charity Schools.

not likelier that Children should forbear to do Evil, when they have been carefully taught to do well? What would this Gentleman advise? Not to teach Children Virtue, it seems, because it is sometimes insufficient to make them virtuous. Would he then teach them Nothing? Impossible.--- The human Mind is impatient of a lazy Indifference. Active it is by the Necessity of it's Nature; a Field it is that by due Cultivation may be made to produce the most valuable Fruits, and for want of it will certainly spring up in Tares and Thistles. What remains then but to teach them Vice? ---And Vice, most certainly they will be taught, if well disposed Christians interpose not to prevent it. Men of a serious Turn are apt to lament the Degeneracy of the World, and to complain of the Times they live in as worse than any of the former. Without entering into the Consideration of this, it will easily be granted, I fancy, that the Times are bad enough to need a Reformation; and that the present Circumstances
of

of the Protestant Religion, and our own Situation as a People, are critical enough to make us think seriously concerning it. And where can the Reformation begin with a fairer Probability of Success, than by a religious Care of young Children, and training them up to sober Virtue and true Piety? "If you would be holy," say the sacred Books of the ancient Persians, "if you would be holy, instruct your Children; because all the good Works they perform will be imputed to you." For the same Reason, also instruct the Children of the Poor. With regard to the present World the best Service we can do to our Country is to people it with a righteous Offspring; and he is the best Patriot who is most in earnest to promote this Service; persuaded that the Hope and Blessing, or else the Curse and Plague of the next Age, is deposited in his Hands, and depends on a due Care to teach Children to *keep the Way of the Lord, and to do Justice and Judgment.* (Gen. xviii. xix.)

The Charity therefore recommended to your Support is a most rational and manly one; to provide for the religious Education of unhappy Children, whose indigent Parents with their best Industry are unable in any tolerable degree to make this most necessary Provision for them. And a most comfortable Charity it will be likewise to all, that *in an honest and good Heart* contribute chearfully to it's Support, especially in that dark and gloomy Time when they are *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath.* It will be small Matter of Comfort to you to recollect in your last Moments in how *fair a Ground* your Lot was fallen, what a goodly Heritage you are to leave behind you, and how much your Possessions exceeded your Necessities. Death is to you an universal Wreck of all your Fortunes. You *brought Nothing into this World, and it is certain you can carry Nothing out;* (1. Tim. vi. 7.) Nothing in-

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deed, but the Memory, and the Comfort arising from it, that in your *Life-Time* you did not confine your *good Things* to your own Enjoyment and Gratification, nor leave your poor Brethren unpitied and unassisted under the heavy Load of their *evil Things*. When those Expences, that were lavished on the Luxuries of Dress and of the Table, or dissipated in Vice and Riot, are remembered with infinite Remorse and Confusion; if you can look back on a wiser Employment of your Fortunes in *feeding the hungry*, instructing the ignorant, and *clothing the naked* Members of Jesus Christ; Hope will animate your Spirits, and supply the Cordial-Drop, that shall fill you with Consolation in the Moments of Agony, even when you are *failing*. Whilst the Earth-Worm feels himself perishing without Hope; whilst the voluptuous close their Eyes in Despair, and open them no more but with the uncompassionate rich Man in the same Torments; whilst the selfish and hard-hearted, who had no Tear for Pity, no Hand for Charity,

Charity, see Death tearing from them all their Fortunes, and dragging them to the Mansions of those, who *shall have Judgment without Mercy* because they *shewed no Mercy*; ---Heaven, on the contrary, will surely own the Friends of the Poor. Sweet Peace and humble Joy shall accompany them to the last. Those heavenly Beings, who rejoice over the Conversion of Sinners, shall come and watch round your sick Bed, shall tend your dying Couch, faithfully guard your last Moments, and with open Arms receive and conduct your departing Spirits into *everlasting Habitations*.

For these awful Reasons therefore *forget not to do good and to distribute*: Refuse not to assist the poor and miserable. *Be merciful after thy Power. If thou hast much, give plenteously; If thou hast little, do thy Diligence gladly to give of that little.* (Tobit iv. 8, 9.)

Very urgent indeed is the Case of the Charity before you; to teach poor Children their Duty to God and Man, to breed them up to be useful Members of the Public, and Pro-

fessors of Christianity, whose *Conversation* through your Assistance, and with the Grace of God, shall *become the Gospel of Christ*, and qualify them for *the Inheritance of the Saints in Heaven*. If you behold them with Compassion now, and mercifully impart to their Necessities; the Day will come, when you shall behold them again with Rapture and Triumph, even that great and awful Day of Judgment, at which they shall appear in your Behalf, and your *Hearts shall leap with Joy* to hear that gracious Declaration of the Son of God: *Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren ye have done it unto me.*---Blessed Jesus! See you not, how he loves the Poor? See you not, how he is concerned for their Welfare; how he is *afflicted in their Affliction*, and rejoices in their Joy? Ah Christians! remember the Judgment-Day Think often and seriously of this awful Trial of your Lives; and reflect deeply on the Necessity of providing *yourselves Friends* to plead in your Behalf, and on the overwhelming Confusion

sion that will surprize you, when the poor Members of Christ, the hungry, the naked, the ignorant shall appear at the Bar of Judgment to confront you.---Were they naked, and you clothed them not ; ignorant, and you refused them Instruction ;---uneducated, and *making themselves vile*, and *you restrained them not* ; I beseech you, Brethren, *suffer the Word of Exhortation* ;---what can you urge then in defence of a wasting Luxury, or a false Frugality, which are no Pleas of just Excuse, since from the one you are very culpably unwilling, and from the other very criminally unable to answer the Demands of Charity ? Your Affluence enables you to do Good : Is there no Guilt in neglecting to do it ? Is there no Guilt in sacrificing to your own Ease and Delicacy, what is due to the Relief and Instruction of Indigence and Ignorance ? You have enough, and more than enough for yourselves : Is there no Guilt in spending your Fortunes in a Round of Folly and Sin, unconscious of every charitable and tender Sentiment, while so many are
wearing

wearing out Life in a sad Variety of Distress, lost in Ignorance, lost in Vice, or dying perhaps of Poverty and a broken Heart? ---Nay let us *hope for better Things, and Things that accompany your Salvation.* Let me successfully importunate with you to employ the Blessings of God in securing your Acceptance with him, *in making to yourselves Friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness;*---Friends, that will not leave you, when every other Friend, when Life itself must leave you;---Friends that will stand by and support you, when your *Heart fails, and your Strength fails;* and if you *break off your Sins by Righteousness, and your Iniquities by shewing Mercy to them,* these are Friends indeed, that will be the best of Advocates for you in the Day of Judgment, and will most assuredly bring you to God's *Presence, where is Fulness of Joy, and at whose right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore,* the appointed Recompence of all those that *have Pity upon the Poor, and keep themselves unspotted from the World.*

God

God of his Mercy give us the Grace to pity them, to *put on Bowels of Compassion*, to *do Justice*, to *love Mercy*, and to *walk humbly* before him for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

SER-

God of his Mercy give us the Grace
to pay them to pay on Bonds of Com-
mitment, to be able to have them, and to
and have them for the sake of
with Christ our Lord.

SER.

S E R M O N XI.

PROVERBS xxiii. 17, 18.

*Let not thine Heart envy Sinners; but be
thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day
long.*

*For surely there is an End, and thine Expecta-
tion shall not be cut off.*

IT is with some Persons no small Dis-
couragement to Religion, that many
wicked Men flourish greatly, and are very
successful in the World. When *the ungodly*
prosper, have Riches in Possession, and enjoy

the present Pleasures of Sin without any present Punishment of it,---weak unsettled Minds are too strongly tempted to conclude, that Virtue is an injudicious Choice; that they have washed their Hands in Innocency, and cleansed their Hearts in vain. But let the Words of Wisdom, let the Voice of Solomon prevail with us to suspend our Judgment, till the Matter be carefully examined. Present Prosperity is no Proof of absolute Happiness. The whole of a Man's Existence is to be considered, before you can safely pronounce on the Goodness, or Badness of his Condition. Because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily, we are not therefore warranted to conclude, that there is no Difference in the Issues of Guilt and Innocence;---that all Things come alike to all; or that there is one and the same Event to the righteous and to the wicked. (Ecclef. ix.2.) The Criminal is reprieved but not pardoned. Let not thine Heart envy Sinners; but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long. For surely there is an
End,

End, and thine Expectation shall not be cut off.

That it may be seen what little Reason there is to *envy* the Pleasures and Successes of bad Men, let us consider

1---The utmost Advantages of a Life of prosperous Wickedness.

2---What Reason we have to be constant *in the Fear of God*; because *there is surely an End, and the Expectations* of good Men *shall not be cut off.*

The Sinners of the Text are the Men of successful Wickedness, who prosper in their Vices, and riot in the Pleasures of Guilt: Men who pay no Homage to God, who neither remember him as the Giver of all Good, to whom their Thanks are due for every Thing they enjoy, nor as *the Judge of all the Earth*, who *shall reward every one according*

cording to his Works: Men, in short, who have forgot their Maker and their Redeemer, *whose God is Gain*, and whose Pleasure is their Law.

Now let it be supposed, that these Sinners by a Life of prosperous Vice should gain all the Instances of Happiness, which this World can furnish;---the most extended Power, the most comprehensive Possession of Riches, whatever the World can give, or human Nature here enjoy.---And this, perhaps, may be thought a very fatal Concession, possibly enough to bribe innumerable Christians out of all their Virtue, and Religion. For indeed the great Body of Transgressors are contented to *make Shipwreck of Faith*, and to sin at a much cheaper Rate, and cannot hope to gain but a very inconsiderable Part of this World *in Exchange for their Souls*. But granting still to Sinners the largest possible Success and Prosperity, there is much Reason to *pity*, and but very little Cause to *envy* them.---I men-

tion

tion not here the Insufficiency of the World's good Things to fill the Capacity or Extent of our Desires ; and that to place our Happiness in this Life, and the Things of it, is to place it, where it never was, and never will be found. I take no Notice, how often Men employ these Things in the Purchase of Vice and Distempers ; how often in the midst of Plenty they are ruined, and rendered miserable by the Abuse of it. Nor shall I detain you to observe, that these good Things are frequently little more than the Shadows of Pleasures, no sooner seen but they are gone, and their *Place is no where to be found*. For, to wave the Consideration of all this, what is the utmost Latitude of earthly Greatness ? What is the Duration of present Pleasure ? Is it not confined within the Limits of the present Life ? Is it not straitened within much narrower Bounds ? Do not “ Men often die to this, “ before they die to Nature ? ” You know, how God reprov'd the fond Worldling in the Parable : (Luke xii. 20.) *Thou Fool !*

this

this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee ; then whose shall all those Things be, which thou hast provided ? But the Sentence may be brought much lower, and yet left sufficiently loaded with Terror. Let God but say, *this Night shall thy Health forsake thee ;* and then what avail thy Riches ; what avails it to possess all that the World is able to give, whilst you have Nothing in the World that you are able to enjoy ? Dispirited with Sickness, and tormented with Pain ; where is the Pleasure of the Sinner that is *clothed in Purple* ; or to what Purpose serves the luxurious Table, but to reproach and disgust his lost Appetite ? The Man cannot enjoy Pleasure but while he enjoys Health : And daily Experience shews, that Health is not inseparable from an Abundance of all Things ; that Sickness spares Gold Lace and Embroidery no more than it spares the poor Man's Rags ; and that the greatest earthly Power is not more a Privilege against Diseases, than it is a Protection against the Grave.

This

This however is saying all that can be said of successful Wickedness; that it may supply the Opportunities of Pleasure, may raise an overgrown Fortune, or obtain a large Extent of Power. And yet, even in this most advantageous Point of View, cool Reason can perceive but little Ground to *envy Sinners*. And if prosperous Offenders feel daily the strongest Evidence, that Plenty is not Enjoyment, nor Power an Immunity from Afflictions; what shall we say of the Rabble of Sinners, whose wicked Gains are incomparably less? If they have not lost all Sense of Virtue, and sinned away the Belief of a God, and a Judgment to come, they are sure to get in the first Place a *wounded Spirit*, such a Regret of Heart, such Apprehensions of an offended God springing from a Sense of Ingratitude for his Benefits, as change the sweetest Honey into the bitterest Gall.---Go next and consult the Goal and the Gibbet, what some gain by their Vices. Ask others, how they
get

get Rottenness in their Bones : How the Debauchee and the Drunkard came to *live out but half their Days*. Ask what it is, that brings *the evil Days* towards us with a swifter Pace, and makes Life *Labour and Sorrow* before the Term appointed by Nature. But if through accidental Strength and Robustness of Constitution some happen to escape the fatal Consequences of Intemperance ; yet what is the whole Amount of their Gains more than a Life of Brutality and Riot ? Allow the utmost that can be allowed to these Things ; yet still they must have the same Limits as our Lives. And how short a Duration is that ? When we *depart hence and are no more seen* in this World, Life and all the Distinctions of Life expire together. There remains no Difference then but that real one between the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious. A good Conscience is then the valuable Possession : For God respects Characters and not Persons, and will *judge all Men according to their Works*.

This

This reminds me of the next Thing proposed, which was to consider

2.---The Reasons we have to be constant in the Practice of true Religion and Virtue.

---*Let not thine Heart envy Sinners; but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long. For surely there is an End, and thine Expectation shall not be cut off.*

It certainly makes a most important Difference in the Account of Life, whether we shall die like Beasts, or whether there be an immortal Spirit within us, that will survive the Dissolution of our Bodies. For if there be a future never ending State, the Pleasures and the Pains of which exceed every Thing present; then Reason writes it with a Sun-beam, that the longest Duration deserves the greatest Care; that it is Wisdom to dispense with some present Inconveniences for an eternal Felicity, and be willing to go

without the Gratifications of Wickedness, in order to escape the future Torments of it. For what Man in his Senses does not account it prudent to part with a little at present for a much greater Advantage in Reversion ?

And surely there is an End. A Day of Judgment, a Time of future Recompence is fixed as certainly as *it is appointed to all Men once to die.* If we go to *Reason*, it will inform us that we are God's Creatures : And as we are reasonable Creatures, we are subject to the Law of our Nature, and are liable to give a Reason of our Actions.

Revelation adds new Light and Strength to *Reason*, confirms and extends all the Hopes and Fears of *Nature*, and assures us, (Acts xvii. 31.) that *God hath appointed the Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness*; and that, after this general Judgment, *the righteous shall enter upon a State of*
end-

endless Joys, *and they that have done evil shall go away into everlasting Punishment.* And who will *envy* Sinners a temporary Enjoyment of unsatisfying meagre Pleasures; who will not rather pity and lament their foolish Choice, who know that the Day is coming, when their lawless Enjoyments will add grievously to the Bitterness of eternal Sorrows? When the Distinctions of this Life are at an End, and the Distinctions of the next begin; those who had their *good Things* here, and enjoyed them in defiance of the Menaces and in contempt of the Promises of the Gospel, will then feel a terrible Reverse indeed, and be ready to exclaim in the Anguish of their Souls: *What hath Pride profited us, or what have Riches with our Vaunting brought us?* (Wisdom v. 8.) No Height of Power, nor Excess of Wealth can indeed rescue the Abusers of Power and Wealth from the heavy Doom of those who *trust in uncertain Riches, and forget the living God.* Their *Lot* in this World *fell*, perhaps, in a *fair Ground*: But they abused their goodly

Heritages in every Way of Vice and Riot, in every Kind of Oppression and Insolence; or they remembered not the Redeemer of their Souls from Death: They lived *without God in the World*, and made a Jest of Religion; or had however no just and serious Sense of it, but *walked in the Way of their Heart and in the Sight of their Eyes*;---for which Misery at length becomes their Portion;---Misery both severe and endless, springing from a Consciousness of the greatest Loss, and a Sense of the sharpest Pain; and those sadly aggravated by the Remembrance of past Pleasure, and the Despair of all future Ease and Relaxation of their Torments.

To the Evidence of *Reason* and *Revelation* let us add the farther Testimony of *Experience*. *Experience* will furnish us with Proof abundantly sufficient to convince us, that good Men have no Reason to *envy* the Choice and prosperous Lot of Sinners. Will you have the Sinner's own Account of the Matter?

Matter? Go then, and visit the **Death-Bed** of some successful Profligate: Ask him, what he thinks of Vice and Virtue *now*;--- which he could rather wish---that the Time past of his Days had been spent as it was, without any *Fear of God or Regard to Man*, without Religion and without Shame,---or had been passed in the Ways of Virtue and Sobriety. Ask him, what he now deems of the Profits of a lucky Fraud, and with what Comfort he recollects the lewd Frolicks, and the wild Riot of his Youth. Instead of finding him delighted, that these Things were his Choice; instead of seeing him contented, that he preferred the *Friendship of the World* before the Favour of his Maker, or rejoicing, that he *made Gold his Hope*, and *the fine Gold his Confidence*;---instead of this you will more probably find him lamenting, that he has survived all his Enjoyments;---you will see him lost in hopeless Grief; wishing in the Agony of his Soul, and at the same Time despairing, to *die the Death of the Righteous*;---chusing the weariest

weariest Life, that Pain, Penury, and Sickness can lay on Nature, as a Paradise in comparison of what he feels, and what he fears from Death. "When the Pleasures" of Life "are past and gone, and the dear Price "comes to be paid down" for these Things, "and our Souls are leaving this World "to take Possession of that everlasting "Inheritance of Shame and Sorrow, *Tribulation and Anguish*, which we have "purchased to ourselves by our Folly;" ---what sensible Heart can forbear to grieve over "that Bargain, which we have so "madly" made, but can never be released "from?" †

It is most certain, that the successfulest Wickedness gains no more than the Pleasures, and Profits, and Honours of a very short Life, that is measured by Days, and Years. But soon is this Scene to change, and quickly does another succeed it, "so "unlike it, so opposite to it, that the same "Riches are no Riches, the same Honours

† Abp. Tillotson, Vol. III, P. 634.

"are

"are no Honours, the same Pleasures are
 "no Pleasures, when that appears."---O
 could you borrow for a Moment the Know-
 ledge of departed Spirits! Had you but
 once tasted the Pleasures of God's right Hand,
 the Joys of that State which the Wisdom of
 the infinite Creator hath contrived, and
 his Almighty Power hath formed for
 the Happiness of his Friends and People!
 Or did you know by *Experience*, what is
 known now only in *Apprehension*, but so felt
 in the *Expectation*, as to make all present
 Woe of no Account, when compared to it;
 ---could you but see *the Lake that burns with
 Fire and Brimstone*;---could you behold the
 Apostate Angels and Rebel Spirits that are
 weltring in it's Flames;---could you hear
 their incessant Wailings, and be Witnesses to
 their inconsolable Despair;---you would want
 no Arguments to convince you, what little
 Cause you have to *envy Sinners*, and what
 abundant Reason there is to be constant in
 the *Fear of God*, to be *stedfast and abounding*

in

in his Work, and to wait all the Days of our appointed Time in a patient Continuance in Well-doing, till the End come, as it surely must come!

These are awful Truths, disagreeable to some Minds undoubtedly, but the more necessary to be told for that Reason. If you have *chosen the good Part*, and are seeking after it in the Earnestness of your Souls, there is then to you no Subject of Fear. If indeed this Case unhappily is *not* your's; if, on the contrary, you have *cast in* your Lot with Sinners, resolved to share in their Pleasures, and to take your Fate with them at last;—shall the Truth therefore be suppressed? Shall I in this Case *prophecy smooth Things*? Shall I *prophecy Deceit*? Shall I say *Peace*, when God and Reason say, *there is no Peace*? This were vile and abominable, an Act of Treason against God and Man, Would God! the Truth would always permit us to say every Thing that is pleasing. But he cannot be your Enemy surely, that earnestly

earnestly warns you of your Danger. When you are walking in the Imagination of your own Heart, and *there is but a Step between you and Death*, certainly he cannot be your Friend, who is silent, or who says, *you shall have Peace*, and *no Evil shall come upon you*. May God open your Ear to Instruction ! May you see your Danger, and fly from it ! May you discern your true Interests, and earnestly pursue after them ! May you consider your whole selves, your Souls as well as Bodies, and your whole Duration, not only in this World, but in the other, not only with regard to Time, but also to the End of Time, and the Days of Eternity !---May the Spirit of Christ's Religion possess our Hearts ; and may God graciously enable us to prepare effectually for *the End* of all Things, so to believe and so to live, so to *abound in the Works* of God, that in the great Day of Trial we may be able to *give Account of the Things done in the Body with Joy and not with Grief* through the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N XII.

PSALM XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our Days, that we may
apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.*

FOR the better understanding of this Psalm it must be remembered, that, when the Israelites in the Wilderness had *murmured* against their Almighty Conductor, and provoked him by their Disbelief of his Power and Goodness, God *was grieved with that Generation*, and the *Hardness* of their *Hearts*, and passed a Sentence upon all *from twenty Years old and upward*, that they should

certainly *die in the Wilderness* in the Space of *forty Years*. This Account of the Matter you read in the fourteenth Chapter of Numbers: And upon this Occasion it was, according to the Opinion of the generality of Interpreters, that Moses composed this solemn Address to the *Lord God of their Fathers*. He paints in lively Colours the Shortness and Uncertainty of the human Life; comparing it to the fleeting Duration of *Sleep*, or to the sudden *Fading of the Grass*, which *in the Morning is green, and groweth up, but in the Evening is cut down, dried up, and withered*. This is the Ground of that solemn Prayer to God contained in the Text.

---“ Since the irreversibile Sentence is gone
“ forth against us, give us the Grace, O
“ God, to ponder it seriously. *Few and evil*
“ as our *Days* must be, instruct us to live,
“ as becomes those Creatures, whose Lives
“ must so soon expire.” *So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.*

These

These Words may suggest to us

1.---A serious Enquiry in what *Manner* we are to *number our Days* in order to learn *Wisdom*.

2.---*What* that *Wisdom* is, which so solemn an Account of our *Lives* will teach us.

Consider then the natural Uncertainty and precarious Tenure of Life; and how easy it is to miscalculate the Number of our Days. And this indeed is the Source of Mistakes the most fatal that can be. While Men blindly reckon on the Certainty of Life, and boldly presume that it's Duration will reach the largest possible Standard, what are usually the dreadful Consequences of this? Men for the first Part of their Days too generally live at random, secure and thoughtless of Nature's last Extremity. But however ungrateful the Reflection on
Life's

Life's Uncertainty may be to the young and the gay, yet, as no Mortal can foresee, when God will bring his Days *to an End*, whether Life and Breath shall remain one Moment longer, there is but too much Cause to admonish them of their precarious Situation, and excite them to a wise Use of the present Hours. Why indeed are you so sanguine in your Expectations of long and prosperous Health; that you shall live, as some have done, for *threescore Years and ten*, or possibly to *four score Years*, by reason of the Strength and Robustness of your Health? If you look backwards, and recall to your Thoughts your former Acquaintance and Neighbours; what Numbers do you miss; ---Numbers even of those, who had as good or better Health, stronger Habits of it built on a stronger Constitution and Strength of Body? Are they gone, departed hence, and seen no more? And what Reason hath any Man to hope against Hope, and flatter himself with the Expectation of grey Hairs? Is it because you are young and robust?

Go

Go then, and read over the Monuments of the Dead; and, if you find no Examples there of Persons as healthful and vigorous cut off in the Bloom of Life, and in the Morning of their Days, then hope still, and flatter thy self, and sin on, till thy *Judgment* which *lingers not* overtakes thee. Is it, because there are Instances of very aged People, who have travelled to the utmost Extremity of Life, and descended by easy Steps and flow into the Place *appointed for all Men*? But how many also fell in the first Spring of Life, in the Strength of Health, and the full Vigour of their Days; while they thought, perhaps, as you do, of a long Reserve of Years to come, wherein they might *consider* and prepare for *their latter End*? If we seriously reflect on the Issues of Life and Death, how extremely *uncertain* these are, how entirely in God's Hand;---the only rational Conclusion is to be virtuous *betimes*, and in every Period of our Lives to be resolutely and immoveably good, to seek our Peace in Jesus while it may be found, and

to

to work out our Salvation with Reverence and Godly Fear.

But consider next the utmost possible Extent of our Days,--that by God's Mercy, and great natural Robustness of Constitution, we may perhaps reach the very remotest Verge of human Life. Long Health is yet no Reason why we should live like Madmen; and, because we feel not the Infirmities of Life, that we may therefore think ourselves at Liberty to plunge into the Vices and Crimes of it. If God has blessed you with firm Nerves and a vigorous Constitution, will you forget him therefore, *till the evil Days come and the Years draw nigh*, when you *shall have no Pleasure*? But surely this is the very Blackness of Guilt, to be *evil* because *God is good*, and to *sin* because *Grace* abounds. And yet how uncertain is the highest Luxuriance of Health? How brief are it's most durable Pleasures? And, if we except the Pleasure of being and doing Good, how little Truth and Sincerity is there

there in the best of what is called earthly Pleasure? After threescore Summers the Clouds gather, the Prospect lowers and darkens, and in a few more Years decrepit Age has filled you with Rheums, and shaken you with Palsies, and wounded your Spirits to a Degree, that without Innocency to pour in it's Balm upon the Mind is beyond the Power of all Patience to endure.

And further, let Men carefully count their Days, and make a true Estimate of Life. Here, if ever, there is Need of Caution to guard against the fatallest Self-Deceit. Be the Period of our Days the full Sum of *threescore Years and ten, or fourscore Years*, if you please; it surely imports us greatly to consider, how many of these Figures are wiped out of our Sum, that possibly the largest and best Part of this Period to most of us is already past and gone, and there remain only the Dross and Dregs of Life, a few wintry Days more,---and then *the Night comes*, and we sink in the cold

Grasp of Death. This is the End of all Men. Scarce are we warm in the World, and, as the Philosopher (Theophrastus) complained, just have we learned to live in, when we are summoned out of it by the infinite God, who having for *an appointed Time placed Man upon Earth* turns him again to Destruction, and says,--Return, ye Children of Men, and give an Account of the Parts you have acted upon the Stage of Life.

And lastly, what is Death, that closes the Number of our Days? When we attend the Beds of our dying Friends, we see indeed after a severe Struggle with a Disease, that at last the Body becomes cold and motionless. But for the spiritual Inhabitant---who knows what becomes of that? "Close
 "shuts the Grave, nor tells a single Tale."
 But though we cannot explore this dark Passage that connects the present and the future World, let us however from the daily Warnings we receive of our own swiftly approaching End, let us learn at least the *Wisdom* to prepare

prepare for it. Each dying Friend and Acquaintance is a kind Remembrancer of our own Mortality.---Hast thou lost a Parent? Think then, to what Inheritance you are born, or what surer Legacy than Death a mortal Parent can bequeath.---Hast thou closed the Eyes of a dear Relation;---of thy *Friend* that was *as thine own Soul*? And are not you formed of the same perishable Materials? Does not the narrow Grave which hath received them as surely expect thee?---Hast Death taken away thy Child, the Darling and Comfort of thy Life? He, that should have followed thee to the Grave, is only *gone before to prepare a Place for thee*, into which you also must in no long Time descend.---The Death of Friends is, in short, a real Message from Heaven, warning *us to be likewise ready*. For our Benefit they sicken;---for our Instruction they die;---to teach us to *consider our last End*, and *so to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom*.

Let us us therefore confider

2.---What that *Wisdom* is, which the *Numbering of our Days* should teach us.

Can it *teach us* less than this, to regard ourselves as *Strangers and Pilgrims* here, Passengers upon the Road to the everlasting World, into which, after a swift Flight of a few Years more, we must all enter, either into eternally happy Mansions, or into horrid and dismal Abodes, into Scenes of Grief and Shame that shall never know an End?

Can it *teach us* less than the *Wisdom* of being religious, the Sense of our manifold Guilt, and the Necessity of returning with the Prodigal to the gracious Father whom we had abandoned? Can it teach us less than serious Repentance, immediately to change our Service, without hesitation to *arise and go to our Father's House*, and lay ourselves at the Feet of our deserted Lord and Master, not one Day to continue in a
State

State in which we should be afraid to die, to be no longer imposed upon by vain Hopes nor misled by wild Desires, but to bid an eternal Adieu to the bewitching Pleasures of this World, and defer even the necessary Offices of Life, rather than delay to secure our present Peace and Safety, or neglect to *work out* our everlasting *Salvation*?

There is indeed another Species of *Wisdom* too common among Men, not learned in the Schools of Death, not obtained by a serious *Numbering of our Days*; the *Wisdom* of this World I mean, the *Wisdom* of gaining Advantages by indirect and unrighteous Arts; the *Wisdom* of making *Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*; the *Wisdom*, or rather the *Madness*, of making a *Mock at Sin*, and banishing God and Religion from our Thoughts. And if you ask what the *Gains* of this *Wisdom* are, it has Votaries enough to magnify, and extol them far above all Reason, and the real Value that is in them. But the Truth, and the whole

whole of the Matter is, that those Gains are only some small Acquisitions, that cannot give Peace to the reasonable Soul, and must soon be left behind. And as to any *Enjoyment* which this *Wisdom* obtains for it's Followers, what is it? "Not a *longer Life*: very often a *shorter*," as † one says, "being cut off by their own Folly in the midst of their Days. Not a *healthier Body*:" But generally "a more *infirm* one, made so by their own debauched and intemperate Living. Not a more *satisfied* Mind: But, on the contrary, a Mind very uneasy for the most part, and full of *Perplexity*." In short, the Fruits of this *Wisdom* are really no more than "the bare *Perverseness*, Nothing but the mere *Irregularity* of those very Pleasures which really and in truth are much" greater "Pleasures when accompanied with Innocence."

† Dr. Clarke Vol. vii. P. 75-76.

Man, let it never be forgotten, Man hath in this World no long Duration. *This I say, Brethren, to use those admirable Words of St. Paul, (1. Cor. vii. 29-31.) this I say, that the Time is short : It remaineth that they that weep be, as though they wept not ; and they who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this World, as not abusing it ; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.* For, in truth, whatever present Advantages you possess, how great, how prosperous, how respected soever you are to-day, yet, if you must shortly die, all this is but the Pomp of an Hour, a theatrical Grandeur that ends with the Play, and returns you to the Dust again, out of which you were originally taken.

But, when we gather *Wisdom* from the *Shortness* of human Life, let us learn a Lesson also from its *Uncertainty* ; that is, the Necessity of *working the Works of him that*
sent

sent us into the World, *while it is Day*. If we would not have God reject us, we must though in a much inferior Degree, yet however in some Degree, and proportionably to our imperfect Powers, we must be able to say, as the blessed Jesus did, *Father, I have glorified thee on the Earth; I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do*. In the Condition of Life in which God hath placed him, every Man may know how far this Obligation extends; namely, to *be sober and temperate, to do Justice, and love Mercy, and walk humbly with God*. And what a Comfort will it be, in that dark and gloomy Time when you are *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, to have this Testimony of your Conscience, that you have fulfilled the Will of God? But in order to this let me once more remind you, that we must be good Husbands of our Time; not adjourning till the Morrow what may as well if not better be done To-Day; punctually discharging the whole of our Christian Duty, and doing Good in the Manner St. Paul directs

rects us, *whilst we have Opportunity*, while we are mercifully spared, and God allows us Health and Time to do it.

Some, it is to be feared, some there will be after all, whom no Advice can influence, whom no Danger will alarm, no Arguments persuade to be in earnest, and seriously to seek, what all at last will earnestly wish to find, the Favour and Acceptance of God. There are infatuated People in the World, the Slaves of Passion and the Servants of Sin, that neglect to *number their Days*, and who despise the *Wisdom*, which the Shortness and Uncertainty of Life ought to teach them. What can work upon thoughtless, stupid Minds, or persuade Men that are grown giddy with Pleasures which the God of their Lives hath forbidden? Unhappy Creatures, who have Reason to no Purpose, and for whom *Christ died in vain*! Shall I tell you once more, that you know not when the Time is;---that all are not favoured with Warnings of approaching Dissolution,

and that it is as reasonable to presume upon the longest Life as the Arrival of such Warnings? Shall I beg you to consider, in *what Way* many depart hence and are *no more seen*; --how some are hurried away by violent Distempers that extinguish the Light of Reason; how others are dispatched by Accidents which destroy in an Instant; and how others fall by various kinds of sudden Death, which unexpectedly *commits the Body to the Ground*, and sends the immortal Soul into the World of Spirits? But if these awful Truths have no Influence on those, in whom *an evil Heart of Unbelief* prevails, and who are *hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, let us however learn this *Wisdom* from *numbering our Days*, from considering how many have perished in the Paths of Wickedness at a Time, perhaps, when they began to be sensible what Way they were in, and were possibly intending to forsake it,--let us learn this *Wisdom*---to live in constant Preparation, and to wait in a *patient Continuance in well-doing all the Days of our appointed*

pointed Time till our Change come. Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord shall find so wisely employed. May this be the serious Purpose of us all : And may God's Grace enable us in the faithful Execution of this Purpose to be steadfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord.

SER-

waited Time till now Change come. Blessed is
that servant of his Lord shall find so wisely
employed. May this be the glorious Purpose
of us all: And may God's Grace enable us
in the faithful Execution of this Purpose to
be faithful and unfeigned, and always abound-
ing in the Work of the Lord, rejoicing as we
know that our Labour is not in vain in the

S E R M O N XIII.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

It is appointed unto Men once to die.

THE Parallel drawn in this Chapter between the Priests under the Law, and our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ, is principally designed to shew the superior Efficacy of the Sacrifice and Death of Christ above the Offerings made by the Law; that, as the latter could not make him that did the Service perfect as pertaining to the Conscience, the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without Spot to God,
having

having purchased eternal Redemption for them, is able, on the contrary, to sanctify Christians, and purge their Consciences from dead Works to serve the living God. This shews both the Necessity and Possibility of Holiness, that we are as well enabled as obliged to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit. With the same Eye to the Purification of our Hearts and Lives it imports us to consider what we are told in the same Chapter, that the new Testament, or Gospel-Covenant, was confirmed by the Blood of the Son of God. An awful Ratification! shewing at once, that the Duties it commands are to be kept sacred and inviolable, and that it's Threatenings as well as it's Promises will be punctually executed. In short, if Christ was once offered to bear the Sins of many; if this Oblation is not to be repeated; if Nothing after this remain but his second Appearance at the last Day for the Salvation of those that wait for him by a patient Continuance in well-doing;---hence it follows, that there is but one Way, and one appointed Time

Time for the obtaining God's Favour and Acceptance. The only Way is to embrace and improve the Grace of God offered to us by Jesus Christ; and the only Time is the Time of the present Life, since *it is appointed to all Men once to die, but after Death the Judgment.*

We are now arrived by the Mercy of God to the Conclusion of the Year. Let me therefore address you To-Day on the Conclusion of Life. And as there are high Probabilities that several of us shall not live to see the End of another Year, consider with me, I beseech you, with the Seriousness that such a Subject deserves

1.---That *it is appointed to all Men once to die.*

2.---How deplorable must be the End of all who disobey the Gospel.

3.---The blissful Lot of those who *die in the Lord.*

Nothing

Nothing is more certain than Death ;---
 no Truth so obvious to every Man's daily
 Experience and Observation. It requires no
 Reasoning, no Deduction, no Meditation
 for Men to discover to themselves, that they
 must shortly quit all Connections with this
 Life. You see daily, that we are all tra-
 velling to the Grave, each of us following
 his Neighbour into a new undiscovered
 World. And were Death indeed, what
 the † Poet calls it, only "landing on some
 "silent Shore," beyond the Roar of Tem-
 pests and the Reach of Danger ; that which
 is deemed the last and most terrible of all
 Evils, so far from an Evil, would be in
 reality the infallible Cure of all others. But
 from Scripture alone can you learn the true
 Philosophy of Death. It is a Sentence,
 which the divine Justice has passed on guilty

† To die is landing on some silent Shore,

Where Billows never break, nor Tempests roar ;

Ere well we feel the friendly Stroke, 'tis o'er.

GARTH.

Creatures ;

Creatures ; from which if Enoch and Elijah were excepted, it shews not only what might have been the happy Lot of every Son of Adam, if Adam had not sinned, but moreover that now God will never more dispense with that Law, which dooms Man who is *Dust to return to Dust* again.

Death in itself is a Separation from all the Things of this World, from the Profits, Honours, and Pleasures of it, from Acquaintance, Relations, Friends, from every Thing, in short, that constitutes the present Life of Man. It is to have the Canals of pleasurable Sensation all obstructed and frozen up. It is to be no longer heard, no longer seen, and shortly no longer thought of. It is to go *hence* (as the Psalmist expresses it) into a *Land where all Things are forgotten*. All this indeed even Nature itself might reconcile us to. Such is our present imperfect State, so prone to Wickedness unless the Prospect of an Hereafter check and restrain it ; our Sufferings in it so many and great ;

our Pleasures so insipid by Repetition ; that Death, considered alone, would be a Consummation to be desired.---But Death is something more than the mere Cessation of our present Being : “ It is a Decision for “ Eternity.” According to the good or ill Employment of our Time, we must be either everlastingly happy ; or the Anguish of a recoiling Conscience, and the Torment of *the Fire that never shall be quenched*, will be the bitter Ingredients of eternal Punishment. So that to one who has forgotten God and *made a Mock at Sin*, “ the weariest “ and most loathed worldly Life, that Pain, “ Age, Penury, and Imprisonment can lay “ on Nature, is a Paradise,” in comparison of what he has to “ fear from Death.” This Messenger of God, the Moment it arrests the disobedient, immediately consigns him to the Ministers of Justice. There is no Respite, no Reprieve. “ Souls departed out “ of these earthly Bodies” have still all the Capacities of Happiness or Misery, “ are “ neither dead, nor asleep till the last Trump
and

“ and general Resurrection, but still alive and
 “ awake. Our Saviour Christ affirms, that
 “ they *all live to God*; the Meaning of which
 “ seems to be this,---that they who are” de-
 parted hence “ are dead only to Men here
 “ upon Earth, but neither dead unto them-
 “ selves, nor yet to” their Creator; “ their Life
 “ not being extinct, but only disappearing to
 “ us, as they have left this Stage which we
 “ continue to act upon.” † The future State
 therefore, and the Nature of it as a State of
 Reward or Punishment, commences with the
 Expiration of the present Life. - *And in the*
Place where the Tree falls, there shall it be :
 (Eccles. xi. 3.) And in the Instant it can be
 truly said of a Man,---he is dead ; it may be
 added with equal Certainty, his Lot is de-
 termined before God ; he is accepted, or re-
 jected for ever. For *it is appointed to Men to*
die but once : And after Death there is *no*
more Sacrifice for Sin; no Way, or Hope of
 Escape ; no Possibility of *working out our*
Salvation.

† Dr. Cudworth's Intel. Syft. p. 799.

If it be certain that all must die, our absolute *Ignorance* of the Time when is equally certain. We know not at all, at what Hour our Lord will come, and call us to answer for our Behaviour. God, who hath for an *appointed Time* placed us upon *Earth*, will, when he pleases, *turn us* again to *Destruction*, and say, -- *Return, ye Children of Men*, and give an Account of the Parts you have acted upon the Stage of *Life*. In the Days of Youth and Vigour we entertain ourselves with various fine Prospects, and are amused by a thousand flattering Schemes. But Death steals unperceived on the pleased Visionaries, and suddenly we sink into the cold Grasp of the ghastly Tyrant. So certain is Death; so uncertain is the Hour of it. There is not a Day in which you may not receive the irreverfible Sentence, that will for ever place you beyond the reach of Sorrow, or beyond the possibility of Comfort.

Are

Are these Reflexions just? Are they really important to mortal Creatures? If all must die, are not all equally interested to play this last Stake of Life well, and prepare to *die the Death of the Righteous*? But ask your own Heart, whether in your present State you are really willing, and believe yourself fit to leave the World. And here no Man need be at a Loss, that will deal impartially with himself. What does your own Conscience answer? What does it reproach you with, and say you are deficient in?---To be sensible of the infinite Importance of dying in Peace with God,---to know that every Hour I am liable to the mortal Wound,---and to find myself not actually prepared for this tremendous Crisis of everlasting Life and Death; surely this is enough to give Activity to Indolence, to make Presumption shudder, and to persuade all Men to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

For

For confider, I befeech you,

2.---How deplorable is the End of thofe, whom Death fhall furprife in Difobedience to the Gospel.

And here let me beg the calm Attention of thofe, who feem fenfible and convinced of this, and fhew fome Concern to avoid a Fate fo miserable. Thou art juft in thy Dealings, regular and abounding in all the Offices of devotional Piety;---and yet guilty, perhaps, of many Breaches upon the Duty of Self-Government, addicted to Intemperance and filthy Lufts. But alas, what juft Grounds of Terror to all that know their Duty, if they venture nevertheless to contradict it in their Lives, if they profefs the Fear of God, and yet do not *walk in his Ways*! When fuch a Man comes to ftand on the Borders of the Grave, he *finds Trouble*

and

and Heaviness indeed, and *the Sorrows of Death compass him about.* Whither shall he go for Aid and Comfort? To God? But, on the contrary, it is the Thought of God, of that Being who *is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*,---it is the horrible Dread of God, that overwhelms him. Should you labour to inspire him with Trust in God's Mercy, you will prove but *miserable Comforters*; and there will remain, after all, a melancholy Darkness upon his Mind, an Uncertainty of his eternal Condition, a Remembrance of his Duty embittered by sad Reflexions on his manifold Transgressions of it, a Fear of God's Judgment that oppresses him with Affliction, and Dismay, and Horror of Conscience. There is indeed no sure and certain Hope in Death to any that do not *give all Diligence to make their Calling and Election sure.* Hast thou lived *without God in the World*? Be sure thou shalt die without him, in Storms and Tempests. Hast thou served God by halves,---*almost a Christian, but not altogether*

altogether such as he will accept and reward ?
 Thy Death shall partake in the Uncertainty of
 thy Life : Clouds shall hide all Hope from
 thee, or shew it but in an half, uncomfortable
 Light at the Time when thou wantest the
 full Support of it, when thou art *walking*
through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.
 It is indeed a general Maxim, almost uni-
 versally verified, that the Colour of your
 Life will have an Influence on your last Mo-
 ments, and either brighten or deepen the
 Shades of Death. You must *walk blameless*
in the Commandments of God, if you wish to
die the Death of the Righteous, and enjoy

3.--- The happy Lot of those that *fall*
asleep in Jesus.

And a Privilege this is the most valuable
 that can be, and deserving our best Dili-
 gence to obtain. *Precious*, says the Plalmist,
in the Sight of the Lord is the Death of his
Saints. (Ps. cxvi. 15.) Such an one leaves
 the

the World in Peace, untormented by any Remorses of his own Mind, which are often more bitter than Death itself. Instead of quitting the present Scene with Reluctance, he is thankful to God for releasing him from the Fetters of the Body. He feels what the Psalmist felt, and can say with the same Sincerity and Transport;---*Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and what is there upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee?* Let Death wound and kill my Body; let it vex and toss me with all it's Storms; sure I am, that at last the Tempest will bring me into *God's Presence*, to the joyful *Haven* where I wish to be.

Men may devote themselves to the World, fall in love with it's Pleasures, and think *it good for them to be here*. But the inexorable Enemy will come nevertheless, and put an End to all their Schemes, strip them of all their Possessions, and turn them out of the World without a Ray of Comfort,---when God shall say, *thou Fool, thy Soul is required*

of thee. Very different is the Death, as very different was the Life of him, who dies with *the Testimony of a good Conscience.* He dies the Friend of God, in the Arms of his Creator. He passes from a State of Holiness here to a State, where *Death, and Sin, and Sorrow are no more.* Truly *Light is sown for the Righteous and Gladness for the Upright in Heart,*

It may be necessary, perhaps, to make Apology to some for discoursing on so grave a Subject. Why so much Talk of Death, and why should we disturb ourselves, and make Life uneasy by the perpetual Thoughts of dying?

And I shall reply to this in the Words of a pious † Writer;---that “were there no “Hurt and Danger in it, this were” surely mere “Spite and Ill-nature;” and, so far from giving you any Interruption, I would

† Dr. Sherlock on Death, P. 163.

“ leave you to enjoy the Comforts of Life
 “ securely, to live on as long as you can, and
 “ let Death come when it will without being
 “ looked for.”

But tell me, my Brethren, what Advice would you give a Man that is walking on the Edge of a Precipice? Shall he look carefully before him ;--or will you maliciously bid him to wink hard, and step on boldly? Is the not seeing his Danger the surest Way to escape it? In the midst of those Arrows of Death that are perpetually flying about you, it is possible nevertheless to banish the Thoughts of your last End, and you may stifle, if you please, the Anguish that arises from a Consciousness of Guilt. This will indeed deliver you from your Fears: But can it likewise deliver you from your Danger? It is just as if you saw yourself exposed to the Gunshot of innumerable Enemies, and as your best Defence should think only of shutting your Eyes. But Things are still the same, whether you attend to them

or not,--of too stubborn a Nature to be subdued by a strong Fancy;--and, when you least think of it, there may be *but a Step* between you and Destruction. Are you unprepared to receive the Summons of this Messenger of God, that will lead you to his Presence, and subject you to his Judgment? Then be afraid; tremble, as you justly may. This is, and ought to be, the daily, the constant Object of your deepest Seriousness,--to remember that *it is appointed to all Men once to die, but after this the Judgment, God's exact, impartial Justice that will render to all according to their Works.* This therefore let us instantly and earnestly prepare for, by *denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and exercising ourselves always to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man.*

I conclude with the affectionate Wish of Moses. *O that you were wise, that you well understood the infinite Necessity*
and

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and Importance of *this, that* you would
deeply *consider your latter End.*

God give us the Grace to do so for
the sake of his blessed Son Jesus Christ our
Lord.

SER-

and importance of this, that you would
deeply consider your latter End.

God give us the Grace to do so for
the sake of his blessed Son Jesus Christ our

S E R M O N XIV.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

*It is appointed unto Men once to die, but after
this the Judgment.*

I ended my last Discourse together with
the Year on a Subject relating to the
Conclusion of Life. The Uncertainty of
our Continuance here, the deplorable End
of those who have forfeited their Christian
Hope, and, on the other hand, the happy
Departure of every Man that falls asleep in
Jesus, were the Heads upon which I employ-
ed

your Meditation.---Suffer me now to begin this, where the next Life itself shall commence ;---namely, with that Judgment which is the tremendous Consequence of Death. And this I shall endeavour to explain by considering

1.---The departed Soul's Appearance before the Majesty of the infinite God.

2.---The Examination it must pass under his all-knowing Inspection.

3.---The eternal Rejection of it, or it's Admission to everlasting Bliss by the impartial Sentence of God's Justice.

Judgment is the Follower of Death : And the Moment in which the Soul quits the Body, it appears in the Presence of God. There will indeed for the Vindication of the Ways of God to Man, at the final Consummation of the World there will be a solemn Day of universal Judgment held, before

fore which shall be gathered all Nations; when every Soul of Man shall receive a more public and solemn Sentence, and a fuller Determination to Happiness or Misery, according to the Nature of his Life. Of this the Scriptures are full. And from them if we go to the Book of Reason, which is likewise the Book of God, we see there also just and affecting Grounds of the same Expectation. Let any Man but consult his own Bosom, and it will tell him in the plainest Voice, that a Being made capable of giving Account, may justly be called to Account; that a Being sensible of Duty to a Superior in one Course of Action, and of Sin and Disobedience in another, must certainly owe a Duty to God and to the World of Fellow-Creatures around him. And the God, that formed him thus disposed and capacitated for right Action, if he loves Virtue, will certainly recompense the Distresses of it; if he hates Vice, must certainly punish the Prosperities of Vice, and finally adjust and balance the several Lots of good and bad Men,

and rectify the Inequalities of their present Circumstances and Situation. But before this awful Close of the Scene of Nature, it is, I think, certain, that immediately after Death there will be a Sentence which the departed Soul must undergo, a present Determination of it's Fate, and an immediate Allotment to Happiness or Misery.

And there needs no remote Excursion, or long Journey to this Tribunal of divine Justice. Whilst you live in the Body, God's Spirit is ever present with you, *about your Bed and about your Path*: And whensoever you leave the Body, die, where you may, you will see in the same Moment God's infinite Essence surrounding you, and present to demand an Account of your Actions. In what Place soever you give your last Groan, your Soul shall instantly find itself under the infinite Eye of your Creator, comforted by his Acceptance and Favour, (if you sought your Peace in *the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus*) or frozen into Despair by his Frowns and Rejection.

Suppose

Suppose then your last Moment ended, that the mortal Distemper has torn you from the Embraces of the Body, and placed you in the Presence of him who *bates all the Workers of Iniquity* : What must be the Fate of those that have rebelled against their Allegiance, and trampled on the Laws of Heaven ; who *despised God's Goodness and Long-Suffering*, and, when God gave his only begotten Son that whoever *believeth in him should not perish*, instead of obeying him *that speaketh from Heaven*, were *to every good Work reprobate*, and in their Actions *denied the Lord that bought them* ? Can you now hide yourself from the infinite Inspection of Providence ? Can there be any Rescue from *the Hands of the living God* ? If thou hast made *Man* thy Confidence, and feared those only *who can kill the Body*, there is now to your Confusion *no Help in them*. For *no Man may redeem his Brother, or make Atonement to God for him*. Befriended as you may be, whilst you live, by the greatest and powerfulest of the Sons

of Men ; supported and favoured by all the Wisdom and Wealth of this World ; yet, when the Limits of the Grave are passed, unless you have lived the Life of the Righteous, your former Connections, instead of availing you then, will only add to your Remorse, and aggravate your Confusion in the Presence of that Being who *accepteth not the Persons of Men*. Your charitable Neighbours, your afflicted Friends may conduct you to the Grave ; but there they must surely leave you, summoned into the Presence, and expecting the Award of God's Justice, that will regard Nothing but the Life you have lived, and *will render to every Man according to his Works*.

How awful and astonishing is this Situation ! How dreadful to those who have *despised the Goodness*, and defied the Justice of God ; the Haters of sober Thought and serious Virtue ; who *walked in the Way of their Heart*, laughed at Religion, and *made a Mock at Sin* ! How easy and happy will the Testi-

many

mony of a good Conscience make you in this important Hour ! How blessed will you be, if you can on Recollection *possess your Souls in Hope* from the Consciousness of having seriously believed in him *whom God hath sent*, and made it the constant Practice of your Life *to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with God* ! If you have not eaten with the Glutton, nor *drank with the Drunken* ; if you have wronged no Man, defrauded no Man ; if you have regularly discharged the Duties of Piety, praying to God with your Families, *training up your Children in the Way* that they should go, constantly *hallowing God's Day*, and *praising him* in the public Congregation ; if indeed you always *feared God* more than Man and *sought the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness* with more Earnestness and Concern than *what you should eat and what you should drink*, and *wherewithal you might be clothed* ;---blessed, infinitely blessed then *are all they that fear the Lord and have walked in his Ways.*

But

But, on the contrary, should there (which God forbid !---but should there) at the Conclusion of your Days remain Nothing but the Memory of a Life spent in Vice and Riot, in the Contempt of every Thing that is virtuous, and in the Practice of every Thing which God has forbidden ; should you come before the dread Majesty of your Maker without any Comfort of Hope ;---when you see yourselves in his Hands, who is going to allot your Portion according to the good or evil Employment of your Lives, should you in this Crisis of your eternal Fate see Nothing upon a Review but a Forgetfulness of God, a Contempt of the Mercies offered by his blessed Son, a cold Unconcern about him, as if you *thought Scorn of the Blood of the Covenant*, no Duty, no Love to him who *bought* you at such a *Price*, Nothing but Profanation of his Sabbaths, a wicked and vain Use of God's Name, jesting at instead of reverencing Religion, spurning and refusing instead of honouring God's Ordinances ;---with what Confusion of Face,
and

and Dejection of Soul will you appear before the infinite *Judge of Quick and Dead*. To come into the Presence of God in order to give Account of a Life spent in Disobedience and Contempt of him——O my Brethren!—who will then be able to hold up his Head? Why do not Men think of this, and *prepare to meet their God*, whilst God allows them Opportunity for it, and Grace to assist them in it? And the Danger of being surpris'd by Death, and turned into the Place of Torments with the People that forget their Creator, is surely sufficient, at least if Men are in their Senses, and think at all, to awaken all their Diligence, and persuade them to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*.

For consider

2.---The infinite Consequence of your appearing in the Presence of God, and the strict Examination you must pass under his universally searching Eye.

In.

In that Day will your Life be reviewed throughout. From the first Moments of Thought, from the first Use of your Reason, there is not a single Wish, or Word, not a single Action, not even a single Omission of any Duty, which you must not strictly account for and justify. Every Circumstance of Ignorance that would *extenuate*, of possible Knowledge that would *increase* your Guilt, will be carefully examined and exactly recompensed. As a Man informed by Reason and natural Conscience; as a Christian enlightened by that Revelation which more plainly and effectually teaches me to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live sober, and righteous, and godly in the World*; in both these Capacities and Relations I must account for the several Talents committed to my Improvement: And every Reason which induced me to Action, whether springing solely from the Fear or Love of Men, or from a Love and Reverence of God, will be fairly produced, and impartially considered.

If

If you doubt the Possibility of this, consider, I beseech you, what is possible to the Omniscience of your Creator ;--and what may be the Knowledge of departed Souls, that will in all Probability know Things in a very different Manner from what they do at present, and see at a single Glance the whole Conduct of their Lives collected to a Point. God from the Moment of my Birth had me always in his Eye. *Known unto him are all his Works from the Beginning of the World.* And he can, no doubt, recal at once, and in a Moment flash upon the Mind, the whole System of our Lives, and, as the Psalmist says, *reprove the wicked and set before them the Things that they have done.*

An Examination, moreover, that will carry full Conviction along with it! As the Eye of God, and the Conscience of Man accompany him in every Action; these at once are Witnesses of every *Thing done in the Body, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

And what a Spectacle will this be to those who are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*,---which no man can avoid, for it is God who sets the Spectacle before him,---and, if it be black over with Guilt, which no man will be able to excuse, because his Conscience will force from him David's short, but severe Confession; *I have sinned against the Lord!* Ah my Brethren! it will then be too late,---let us therefore make the Confession now; Let us acknowledge our Guilt with deep Contrition, and unfeigned Repentance; imploring in the Earnestness of our Souls that God *for Christ's Sake* would *forgive us all that is past*, whilst it is possible to *flee from the Wrath to come*. For when Death has laid his Iron Hand upon us, there is no Repentance in the Grave; and to say then, that we *have sinned*, would be only the Language of incurable Guilt, and inconsolable Despair. Let us now in *the accepted Time and Day of Salvation* hearken to the Voice of Conscience, and, according to our Saviour Jesus Christ's affectionate Advice, let us

agree

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gree with this Adversary quickly whilst we are in the Way with him, lest he should deliver us to the Judge, and the Judge deliver us to the Tormentor to pay the Debt of divine Justice in everlasting Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth.

---For

3.---The Sentence to be pronounced in the awful Judgment, which is the tremendous Consequence of Death, will either entitle you to everlasting Bliss, or doom you to the eternal Misery *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

A Sentence this, though not so public, nor in it's Consequences so compleat, as it will be in the universal Judgment of the whole Race of Mankind, that will be, nevertheless, as stedfast at least, and as irreversible to the full. True Christianity knows Nothing of Purgatory, and the Relief of the dead by the Prayers of the living. God will judge you by *the Things done in the Body*; and what he has determined on your moral Character, either for your everlasting Hap-

piness or Misery, that God will never alter.-- What is it then that Reason writes with a Sun-beam,---which Conscience in the loudest, plainest Language speaks? That surely, which you read in Job ; (xxviii. 28.) *Unto Man , he saith, behold the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom ; and to depart from Evil is Understanding.*

Would you fully comprehend the Truth of this, and know the Madness of despising this Wisdom ;---then forget for a Moment, that you are now in this Place, and imagine that you *stand before the Judgment-Seat of God*,---that your Trial is begun,---that your Lives are examined,---and, in conclusion, that God pronounces the horrible Sentence ; ---*Depart from me, ye Cursed.*---What a Flash of Vengeance ! What a Clap of Thunder !---What a Sentence of everlasting Anguish and Despair !---To depart from God,---to be eternally banished from God,---cursed with the Curse of God,---without a Possibility of Reconciliation,---without Hope of Comfort

Comfort, or Way to *escape the Damnation of Hell*!---Was I born,---was I baptized,---have I professed myself a Christian for this; that I should *forget God*, and despise the Gospel, and be doomed at last to *dwell in devouring Flames*!---Blessed be God! this is but a mere Supposition. And blessed are all they who amend their Lives, and so think and act, that this Supposition may never become to them a certain Fact, and an unalterable Reality.

And indeed, would you believe those, who *are the Ministers of God to you for Good*, who *know and declare to you the Terrors of the Lord*; would you be persuaded to *break off your Sins by Righteousness*, to *do no Iniquity*, to *do no Violence*, to honour God's *Sabbaths*, and *reverence his Name and his Sanctuary*, to *be sober and temperate*, to be *merciful to the poor*, and live in perfect *Charity* with all Men; instead of the dreadful Sentence,---*Depart ye Cursed*, (and which I devoutly beg of God may never be your Portion!)—how com-

fortable

portable, on the other Hand, how blisful
 would be the blessed Welcome, which every
 sincere Servant of Jesus Christ, when he *dies*
the Death of the Righteous, and comes into the
 Presence of God, shall most certainly re-
 ceive?—*Well done good and faithful Ser-*
vant, thou hast been faithful over a few Things,
I will make thee Ruler over many Things: En-
ter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.

God of his infinite Mercy grant this to be
 the Portion of every one of us. And give
 us, gracious Lord, the Wisdom of Religion,
 so to live, so to *work out our Salvation*, so to
 prepare for this awful Judgment, that we
 may give Account of the Things done in the
 Body with Joy and not with Grief, in this
 great Day of Trial, for the sake of Jesus
 Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father
 and the Holy Ghost, the one ever blessed
 God, be ascribed, as is most due, all
 Honour and Glory both now and for
 evermore.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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